

Hare Krishna! On 1 April 2017 is a very special day, 1000<sup>th</sup> Appearance day of great Vaishnava *acarya*, Sripad Ramanujacarya.

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## Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple Srirangam





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## **II. Vaishnava temples around Srirangam:**

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2. *Sri Adi Narayana Perumal Kovil at Gopurapatti*
3. *Sri Pundarikaksha Perumal Temple at Thiruvellarai*
4. *Uthamar Kovil (Thirukkarambanoor)*
5. *Anbil Sundararaja Perumal Temple*
6. *Azhagiya Manavala Perumal Temple at Uraiur*
7. *Appakkudathan Perumal Temple*
8. *Gunaseelam*
9. *Kattu Narasimha Perumal Temple (Azhagiya Singar - handsome jungle God)*

## **III. Life and Teachings of Sripad Ramanujacarya**

### **Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple at Srirangam**

**Srirangam** or *Sri Rangaksetra* is the largest temple in world in which worship is still being performed. According to the great *acaryas* of Sri Sampradaya, Srirangam is the supreme holy place, it is Vaikuntha manifested in this world. Its history and its glories are spoken of in many of the Vedic literatures and *Puranas*. Srirangam, the premier Vaishnava temple in South India is the first and foremost among the 108 Vaishnava *divyadesas*. *In the year 1511 A.D., Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu visited Srirangam when He was touring South India. Lord Caitanya spent four months of Caturmasya Vrata (rainy season) in Srirangam, the longest time He spent in one place during His travels. Lord stayed at the house of a Sri Vaishnava brahmana named Venkata Bhatta, who then got the opportunity to serve the Lord to his heart's content. Sri Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, who is one of the Six Gosvami's of Vrindavana, was the son of Venkata Bhatta.*

Srirangam (formerly *Vellithirumutha gramam*) and *Thiruvarangam* in Tamil is an island and a part of the city of Tiruchirappalli in south India, surrounded by holy Kaveri River and Kollidam. Srirangam is the main centre of worship and culture for the Sri Vaishnavas, the disciplic line of devotees of Lord Vishnu (Krishna) that begins with Lakshmi Devi (Sri, Lord Vishnu's consort). Historically, their main *acarya*, or spiritual teacher, was Sripad Ramanujacarya.

*Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madha-lila* chapter 9 verse 79 describes:

*Sri Ranga-ksetra (Srirangam) is a very famous place. It lies in the district of Tiruchchirapalli, about ten miles west of Kumbhakonam and near the city of Tiruchchirapalli, on an island in the Kaveri River. The Srirangam temple is the largest in India, and there are seven walls and seven roads surrounding it. The ancient names of these roads are the road of Dharma, the road of Rajamahendra, the road of Kulasekhara, the road of Alinadana, the road of Tiruvikrama, the Tirubidi road of Madamadi-gaisa, and the road of Ada-iyavala-indana. The temple was founded before the reign of Dharmavarma, who reigned before Rajamahendra. Many celebrated kings like Kulasekhara and Yamunacarya (Alabandaru) resided in the temple of Srirangam. Yamunacarya, Sri Ramanuja, Sudarsanacarya and others also supervised this temple.*

*The incarnation of the goddess of fortune known as Godadevi or Sri Andal was one of the twelve Alvars, liberated persons known as divya-suris. She was married to the Deity of Lord Sri Ranganatha, and later she entered into the body of the Lord. An incarnation of Karmuka named Tirumanga (also one of the Alvars) acquired some money by stealing and built the fourth boundary wall of Srirangam. It is said that in the year 289 of the Age of Kali, the Alvar of the name Tondaradippadi was born. While engaged in devotional service he fell victim to a prostitute, and Sri Ranganatha, seeing His devotee so degraded, sent one of His servants with a golden plate to that prostitute. When the golden plate was discovered missing from the temple, there was a search, and it was found in the prostitute's house. When the devotee saw Ranganatha's mercy upon this prostitute, his mistake was rectified. He then prepared the third boundary wall of the Ranganatha temple and cultivated a tulasi garden there.*

*There was also a celebrated disciple of Ramanujacarya's known as Kuresa. Sri Ramapillai was the son of Kuresa, and his son was Vagvijaya Bhatta, whose son was Vedavyasa Bhatta, or Sri Sudarsanacarya. When Sudarsanacarya was an old man, the Muslims attacked the temple of Ranganatha and killed about twelve hundred Sri Vaisnavas. At that time the Deity of Ranganatha was transferred to the temple of Tirupati, in the kingdom of Vijaya-nagara. The governor of Gingee, Goppanarya, brought Sri Ranganatha from the temple of Tirupati to a place known as Simha-brahma, where the Lord was situated for three years. In the year 1293 Saka (A.D. 1371) the Deity was reinstalled in the Ranganatha temple. On the eastern wall of the Ranganatha temple is an inscription written by Vedanta-desika relating how Ranganatha was returned to the temple.*

Srirangam temple compound covers about 3 square miles. The main temple is surrounded by seven walls, which represent the seven planetary systems described in Vedic cosmology. The seven walls have twenty-one towered entrances (gopurams), the highest of which is called the Rajagopuram and is 236 feet tall, biggest in Asia, and can be seen from at least ten miles away. Much of the town of Srirangam is within the three outer walls of the temple compound. After Tirupati, this is the second most visited Vaishnava temple in South India.

*The Deity in the main temple is Sri Ranganatha Swamy, a two-armed form of Lord Vishnu reclining on the divine serpent Ananta Sesa. Near His feet are seated His two consorts, Sri Bhu and Sri Neela. In front of Lord Ranganatha is the utsava-murti of Lord Vishnu, called Sri Manavala Perumal. This deity is taken out of the temple for processions. Alongside Lord Ranganatha is Deity Tiruvaranga, who was worshiped as a substitute during the Muslim period, when the original could not be found. At the feet of the Lord is Vibhisana, the brother of Ravana. Above the main altar is the Sriranga-vimana (golden tower) fully made of gold. On the four sides of the Sriranga vimana are carvings of four forms of Lord Vishnu. On the south side is Para-Vasudeva, on the west is Acyuta, on the north Ananda and on the east Govinda.*

The priests of Srirangam have worshiped Sri Ranganatha in much the same way since the 18th century, when Sri Ramanuja set up strict standards of worship, with a meticulous schedule of songs, prayers, rituals, and offerings. Each morning at 6:45 am, a cow with her head facing away from Lord Ranganatha and an elephant facing the cow are brought before the altar. Thus when the deity's doors are opened the first thing that Lord Ranganatha sees is the rear end of a cow and the head of an elephant, which are both

considered very auspicious. Instead of a conch-shell being blown, the elephant blows his trunk. This is the most auspicious time to see Lord Ranganatha.

Since the time Sri Ranganatha decided to stay at Srirangam countless kings, queens, saints, sages, devotees, demigods, and goddesses have eagerly stood before the doors of His chamber awaiting His merciful glance. Millions of souls since ancient times have had that fortune, and many more will have it for many years to come. *Vaikuntha Ekadasi* is one of the main festival at the Srirangam temple.

### **History of Sri Ranganatha Swamy:**

History of Srirangam as revealed in various *Puranas* traces back to the beginning of creation. At the beginning of this creation, Lord Brahma was born from the lotus sprouting from the navel of Lord Vishnu. There was darkness all around and Lord Brahma was initiated with a *mantra*, he chanted this mantra and was given the power to create. Brahma wanted a deity to worship. Pleased by the penance of Brahma, Lord Vishnu manifested Himself in the form of Lord Ranganatha lying on the Ananta Sesa for Brahma to worship. Lord Ranganatha appeared with His Deity chamber or *vimana*.

The Lord informed Brahma that he had come as a *Svayamvyakta* - on his own volition - as a deity. He would appear likewise in eight places on earth - *Srirangam, Sri Mushnam, Venkatadri, Saligram, Naimisaranya, Totadri, Pushkara and Badrinath*. Sri Ranga Vimana is the first and the earliest of all these. The Lord directed Brahma to worship him strictly according to the procedure for worship laid down in the Agamas.

Brahma carried the deity to *Satyaloka* and installed it on the banks of the river, Viraja. Brahma worshiped that deity for a long time. After him, Vaivasvata Manu, performed the worship. When his son Ikshvaku, became the King of Ayodhya, he wanted to have it installed at Ayodhya. Ikshvaku performed penance which lasted for many 100 years at the end of which he was permitted by Brahma to take it to Ayodhya. It was this dynasty in which Lord was later to appear in His *avatar* as Lord Ramacandra. Sri Ranganatha Swamy was their ancestral Deity.

After the coronation of Lord Ramacandra in Ayodhya, the celebration went on for one month. Nobody could leave the association of dear-most Lord Rama in Ayodhya. Seeing Vibhisana's deep attachment, Rama wanted to give him the best thing He had. Vibhisana is the symbol of *sarnagati*. He surrendered everything to Lord Ramacandra. He took such risk in his loving service to Sri Rama. Lord Rama gave him His own personal *murti*, which was the *ishtadev* of Raghu dynasty for many ages.

Along with *vimana*, Vibhisana was carrying the deity to Lanka. On an island on the banks of Kaveri river, there was a king named Dharma Varma. Vibhisana stopped on this island of Sri Ranga. King Dharma Varma had earlier been to Ayodhya and saw the puja of Ranganath Swamy and in the heart of his heart he prayed that the Lord come here in his kingdom so that he could worship Him. Dharma Varma performed the worship of Sri Ranganatha Swamy and when it was time to go to Lanka, the *murti* would not move. The Lord spoke to Vibhisana, "*I wish to remain here. This Ranga kshetra is Vaikuntha, it is My abode. I will remain here. I must fulfil the prayers of Dharma Varma. You go back to Sri Lanka and I will protect you.*"

*Generally deities face the eastern direction. But Ranganath Swami is facing the southern direction. His eyes are facing towards Sri Lanka. And by that glance He is protecting and fulfilling all of Vibhisana's desires.*

According to one commentary by a Vaishnava *acarya* of Sri Sampradaya, in Ayodhya, Sita asked Lord Rama the following. "When Vibhisana was telling Ravana that I should be sent

back, he told that ever since I came in Sri Lanka there were inauspicious moments. I am goddess of fortune. I am supposed to make everything auspicious, then how come as soon as I came to Lanka there was inauspiciousness." Then Lord Rama said, it was not because of you but Ravana's nefarious activities. Sita said but still I am the source of auspiciousness then why everything became inauspicious. So Rama said that, "In the form of Ranganath I will always look towards Sri Lanka to show how supremely auspicious you have made it."

Dharma Varma built a very beautiful temple but over the years the temple got covered over by sandstorms and floods. As generations went by it was forgotten. Then one day, temple histories say, a king of the Chola dynasty was resting under a tree in the area when a parrot told him that Lord Ranganath was buried under the sand. The parrot was again and again repeating a *sloka*:

*Kaveree Viraja Seyam Vaikuntam Rangamandiram Sa Vasudevo Pangesah Pratyaksham  
Paramam Padam |  
Vimanam Pranavakaram Vedasrungam Mahadhbhutham Srirangasayee Bhagavan  
Pranavarthaprakasakah ||*

"The river Kaveri is the very same river Viraja that eternally flows in Vaikuntha, Srirangam Temple is verily Vaikuntam itself, the Abode of Lord Vishnu where he sits in all splendour and majesty in the company of Nityasuris Eternal associates. The Lord of Arangam, is none but Vasudeva, the primeval Lord Himself. The vimana is verily the external Paramapada itself. The vimana is in the form of the Pranava (OM). The four towers are marvellously akin to the four Vedas and the Lord, Sri Rangasayee is expounding the import of the Pranava."

The king then excavated the temple and restored all parts of the huge complex. Over the years to follow, numerous Chola and Pandya kings, including King Kulasekhara, expanded and renovated the temple. Great Vaishnava leaders Yamunacarya, Ramanujacarya and Sudarsanacarya all had important roles in the further development of Srirangam. Natha Muni worshipped this place. Sripad Yamunacarya made his headquarter and then his disciple Ramanujacarya came to establish the worship as it is seen today and from that time the worship is going on by his descendants.

In 1334, Ulugh khan, a Moghul king attacked Srirangam. During this period, lasting close to 50 years some of the residents fled the place but many others stayed on to fight the invaders. And at that time, there were 12,000 Vaishnavas in Srirangam. Amongst those 11,250 were massacred. The remaining 750 Vaishnavas somehow or other escaped to the village Gopurapatti. According to *Koyilozhugu*, an authentic record of events relating to Srirangam, Sri Vaishnavites were scattered during the invasion. Divided into various teams, each team took upon various responsibilities for protection of the temple. Then in the 15th and 16th centuries the Vijayanagar and Nayak rulers slowly began to revive the glories of Srirangam. In the 17th and 18th centuries Muslims, the French, and finally the British used the fort-like temple of Srirangam during their conquests. Eventually, when India gained independence in 1947, the Indian government and the Sri Vaishnavas took over the management of the temple.

### **Lord Caitanya's Visit to Srirangam**

*Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madha-lila* chapter 9 verses 79-165 describe visit of Lord Caitanya to Srirangam. Lord Krishna appeared 500 years ago in Bengal as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who accepted the mood of a devotee of Krishna. After taking *sannyasa*, the renounced order of life, Lord Caitanya travelled throughout India for 6 years, visiting holy places and spreading the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. In the year 1433 Sakabda (A.D. 1511), when Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu was touring South India, He visited

Srirangam. Lord Caitanya observed the practice that a *sannyasi* ceases travel during the 4 months of the rainy season (Caturmasya). During that period, the longest time He spent in one place was at Srirangam at the house of a Sri Vaishnava *brahmana* named Venkata Bhatta, who then got the opportunity to serve the Lord to his heart's content. Sri Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, who is one of the *Six Gosvami's of Vrindavana*, was the son of Venkata Bhatta. Because Venkata Bhatta was a devotee with whom Lord Caitanya could discuss the transcendental pastimes of Lord Krishna, Lord Caitanya passed His days at Srirangam in great happiness.

While there, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took His bath in the river Kaveri and visited the temple of Sri Ranganatha Swami. Every day the Lord also danced in ecstasy. The beauty of Lord Caitanya's body and His ecstatic love of God were witnessed by everyone. Many people used to come see Him, and as soon as they saw Him, all their unhappiness and distress vanished. Every day, local Vaishnava *brahmanas* would invite Caitanya Mahaprabhu to their homes for prasadam.

Venkata Bhatta and Caitanya Mahaprabhu developed a friendly relationship, and they would happily laugh and joke together. Since Venkata Bhatta belonged to the *Sri Sampradaya* and worshiped the Supreme Lord in His majestic aspect as Laxmi-Narayana, Caitanya Mahaprabhu would have lengthy spiritual discussions with him about worshiping Laxmi-Narayana and worshiping the Lord in His most sweet form as Radha-Krishna. Lord Caitanya (all the while in a pleasant mood) cited a scriptural reference that tells how Laxmi, the consort of Narayana, wanted to join the most confidential pastimes of Krishna but was not allowed to do so.

Unable to defeat Lord Caitanya's arguments, Venkata Bhatta said, *"You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna Himself. You know the purpose of Your activities, and the person whom You enlighten can also understand Your pastimes."* Caitanya Mahaprabhu enlightened Venkata Bhatta in all the subtle details of Lord Krishna's most intimate pastimes. Lord Caitanya then said, *"There is no difference between the transcendental forms of the Lord. Different forms are manifested due to different attachments of different devotees. Actually the Lord is one, but He appears in different forms just to satisfy His devotees."*

When the four-month period ended, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took permission from Venkata Bhatta to continue on with His travels. When Caitanya Mahaprabhu bade farewell, Venkata Bhatta fell down unconscious in the ecstasy of spiritual love. Pilgrims to Srirangam can still visit the house of Venkata Bhatta. During His stay Lord Caitanya carved with His own hands deities of Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra and worshipped Them. These deities are worshipped even today in a small temple called *Jagannatha Math* across the road from Venkata Bhatta's house.





**Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple at the Srirangam island and sacred Kaveri river.  
Kaveri is one of the seven holy rivers on earth.**



**Way to Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple**



### **Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple at Srirangam**

Srirangam temple compound covers about 3 square miles. The main temple is surrounded by seven walls, which represent the seven planetary systems described in Vedic cosmology. The seven walls have twenty-one towered entrances (gopurams), the highest of which is called the Rajagopuram and is 236 feet tall, biggest in Asia, and can be seen from at least ten miles away. Much of the town of Srirangam is within the three outer walls of the temple compound. After Tirupati, this is the second most visited Vaishnava temple in South India.





**Rajagopuram of Srirangam Temple**

Rajagopuram is 236 feet tall, biggest in Asia, and can be seen from at least ten miles away.



**Way to Sripad Ramanujacarya Samadhi at Srirangam**



ஸ்ரீ ராமானுஜர்

SRI RAMANUJAR

**Sripad Ramanujacarya at his Samadhi at Srirangam**



**Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple (inside)**





### **Lord Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple at Srirangam**

*The Deity in the main temple is Sri Ranganatha Swamy, a two-armed form of Lord Vishnu reclining on the divine serpent Ananta Sesa. Near His feet are seated His two consorts, Sri Bhu and Sri Neela. In front of Lord Ranganatha is the utsava-murti of Lord Vishnu, called Sri Manavala Perumal. Utsava-murti is taken out of the temple for processions. Alongside Lord Ranganatha is Deity Tiruvaranga, who was worshiped as a substitute during the Muslim period, when the original could not be found. At the feet of the Lord is Vibhisana, the brother of Ravana.*



### **Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Ranganatha Swamy**





### **Vimana of Lord Sri Ranganatha Swamy**

*Above the main altar is the Sriranga-vimana (golden tower) fully made of gold. On the four sides of the Sriranga vimana are carvings of four forms of Lord Vishnu. On the south side is Para-Vasudeva, on the west is Acyuta, on the north Ananda and on the east Govinda.*



### **Garuda Shrine at Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple**

In the 4th enclosure of the temple is the biggest mantapa for Garuda. 25 feet tall Deity of Garuda is seen graciously joining his palms and sitting opposite the temple of Lord Ranganatha. Garuda appears in such a majestic form ready to take off with the Lord. The dhoti of Sri Garuda is 30 meter long. He is adorned with Ashta Nagabaranam (a jewel of 8 serpents). Abhisheka or Thirumanjana is not performed to Sri Garuda. Kozhukkattai – the sweet pudding balls are offered

as naivedyam on every Thursday. Sugriva and Angada are the Dwarapalakas of the sanctum – sanctorum of this temple. On the Margazhi Tiruvadirai star day, a festival for Sri Garuda is celebrated.



### History of Srirangam as revealed in *Puranas* traces back to the beginning of creation

At the beginning of creation Lord Brahma wanted a deity to worship. Pleased by the penance of Brahma, Lord Vishnu manifested Himself in the form of Lord Ranganatha lying on the Ananta Sesa for Brahma to worship. Lord Ranganatha appeared with His Deity *vimana*. Brahma carried the deity to Satyaloka and worshiped for a long time. After him, Vaivasvata Manu, performed the worship.

When his son Ikshvaku, became the King of Ayodhya, he wanted to have it installed at Ayodhya. He performed penance which lasted for many 100 years at the end of which he was permitted by Brahma to take it to Ayodhya.



Lord Ramacandra worshipping Sri Ranganatha Swamy at Ayodhya



Lord Ramacandra appeared in this dynasty in Treta-yuga. Sri Ranganatha Swamy was there ancestral Deity.



After the coronation of Lord Ramacandra in Ayodhya, Lord Rama wanted to give to Vibhisana the best thing He had. He gave him His own personal *murti*, Sri Ranganatha Swamy, which was the *ishtadev* of Raghu dynasty.



Along with vimana, Vibhisana was carrying the deity to Lanka. On an island on the banks of Kaveri river, there was a king named, Dharma Varma. Vibhisana stopped on this island of Sri Ranga.





King Dharma Varma had earlier been to Ayodhya and saw the puja of Ranganath Swamy and in the heart of his heart he prayed that the Lord come here in his kingdom so that he could worship Him. He performed the worship of Ranganath Swamy and when it was time to go to Lanka, the *murti* would not move.



The Lord spoke to Vibhisana, "I wish to remain here. This Ranga kshetra is Vaikuntha, it is My abode. I will remain here. I must fulfil the prayers of Dharma Varma. You go back to Lanka and I will protect you." Generally deities face the eastern direction. But Ranganath Swami is facing the southern direction. His eyes are facing towards Sri Lanka. And by that glance He is protecting and fulfilling all of Vibhisana's desires.





**Utsava Deities at Srirangam Temple**



**Devotees taking tirtham from holy Kaveri river at Srirangam in preparation for the festival**



**Maha-prasadam stall at Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple**





### Foot Prints temple of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu at Srirangam

This temple is at the centre on the main road going towards Srirangam temple. In the year 1511 Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu visited Srirangam during His South India tour. Lord Caitanya observed the practice that a *sannyasi* ceases travel during the 4 months of the rainy season (Caturmasya). During that period, the longest time He spent in one place was at Srirangam at the house of a Sri Vaishnava *brahmana* named Venkata Bhatta, who then got the opportunity to serve the Lord to his heart's content. Sri Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, who is one of the *Six Gosvami's of Vrindavana*, was the son of Venkata Bhatta. Because Venkata Bhatta was a devotee with whom Lord Caitanya could discuss the transcendental pastimes of Lord Krishna, Lord Caitanya passed His days at Srirangam in great happiness.



While at Srirangam, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took His bath in the river Kaveri and visited the temple of Sri Ranganatha Swami. Every day the Lord also danced in ecstasy. The beauty of Lord Caitanya's body and His ecstatic love of God were witnessed by everyone. Many people used to come see Him, and as soon as they saw Him, all their unhappiness and distress vanished. Every day, local Vaishnava *brahmanas* would invite Caitanya Mahaprabhu to their homes for prasadam.





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### **Foot prints of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu at Srirangam**

Unable to defeat Lord Caitanya's arguments, Venkata Bhatta said, "You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna Himself. You know the purpose of Your activities, and the person whom You enlighten can also understand Your pastimes." Caitanya Mahaprabhu enlightened Venkata Bhatta in all the subtle details of Lord Krishna's most intimate pastimes. Lord Caitanya then said, "There is no difference between the transcendental forms of the Lord. Different forms are manifested due to different attachments of different devotees. Actually the Lord is one, but He appears in different forms just to satisfy His devotees." When the four-month period ended, Sri Caitanya took permission from Venkata Bhatta to continue on with His travels. When Caitanya Mahaprabhu bade farewell, Venkata Bhatta fell down unconscious in the ecstasy of spiritual love. Pilgrims to Srirangam can still visit the house of Venkata Bhatta.



**Pushkarini - Festival time at Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple at Srirangam**  
Once Sripad Ramanujacarya washed his hands here. Immediately all the aquatics in the pond manifested four-handed form and returned back to Godhead.





**Thai Ther festival at Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple**



**Samadhi of Yamunacarya**

Just around when Ramanuja abandoned the life of a householder and became a *Sannyasi*, about that time, Yamunacarya being very old was on the look-out for a young person of good ability and character to take his place as head of the Mutt at Srirangam. He had already heard of Ramanuja through his disciples and made up his mind to instal Ramanuja in his place. He now sent for Ramanuja. By the time Ramanuja reached Srirangam, Yamunacarya had left this world; and Ramanuja saw his body being taken by his followers to the cremation ground outside the village. Ramanuja followed them to the cremation ground. Ramanuja saw Yamunacarya body fingers were uniquely curled. Three of Yamunacaryas fingers were curled.

Taking this as Yamunacarya's last 3 wishes for him, Ramanujacharya proclaimed to fulfil first wish that a Visishtadvaita Bhashya should be written for the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa. At this the 1st finger of Yamunacarya uncurled. Secondly Ramanujacharya proclaimed that the names of Parasara and Veda Vyasa, should be commemorated on the earth by giving it to a person worthy to bear it. Yamunacarya's 2nd finger got uncurled. Thirdly Ramanuja would compose a



commentary on Tiruvaymozhi of Nammalwar, the most prolific of Alvars. Thereupon the 3rd finger also got straightened. Ramanuja lived for 120 years, and in the course of his long life, fully redeemed his promise by fulfilling all the 3 wishes of Yamunacarya. Yamunacarya was then given Samadhi (entombed) on the banks of river Kollidon in Srirangam. This is around 10 min walk from back gate of Ranganatha Swamy temple via Rangnayaki Nachiar Kovil to river banks. *Samadhi* is a little towards right side of the bathing ghats of the river. Many *acaryas samadhis* are also present there.



**Local banana stall near Srirangam temple**



**Hare Krishna - International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) Temple at Srirangam**

ISKCON temple is about 2 km from Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple on the main road towards Kaveri river.



**Their Lordships Sri Sri Jagannatha, Baladeva, Subhadra at ISKCON Srirangam temple**



**His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada  
Founder-Acarya of International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)**





**Guest house of Srirangam temple - Sree Renga Vilas - very nice accommodation facility**

## **Temples Around Srirangam**

### **1. House of Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami and Jagannatha Math:**

House of Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami and Jagannatha Math is just behind Srirangam temple. Srila Gopala Bhatta Gosvami is one of the *Six Gosvami's of Vrindavana*. He was the son of Venkata Bhatta. In the year 1433 Sakabda (A.D. 1511), when Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu was touring South India, He stayed for four months during the period of Caturmasya at the house of Venkata Bhatta, who then got the opportunity to serve the Lord to his heart's content. Gopala Bhatta also got the opportunity to serve the Lord at this time.

*Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madha-lila* chapter 9 verses 79-165 describe visit of Lord Caitanya to Srirangam.

After visiting the holy place named Siva-ksetra, Caitanya Mahaprabhu arrived at Papanasana and there saw the temple of Lord Visnu. Then He finally reached Sri Ranga-ksetra. After bathing in the river Kaveri, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu saw the temple of Ranganatha and offered His ardent prayers and obeisances. Thus He felt Himself successful. In the temple of Ranganatha, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu chanted and danced in ecstatic love of Godhead. Seeing His performance, everyone was struck with wonder. A Vaisnava known as Venkata Bhatta then invited Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to his home with great respect. Sri Venkata Bhatta took Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to his home. After he washed the Lord's feet, all the members of his family drank the water. After offering lunch to the Lord, Venkata Bhatta submitted that the period of Caturmasya had already arrived. Venkata Bhatta said, "Please be merciful to me and stay at my house during Caturmasya. Speak about Lord Krishna's pastimes and kindly deliver me by Your mercy." Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu remained at the house of Venkata Bhatta for four continuous months. The Lord passed His days in great happiness, enjoying the transcendental mellow of discussing Lord Krishna's pastimes.

While there, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took His bath in the river Kaveri and visited the temple of Sri Ranga. Every day the Lord also danced in ecstasy. The beauty of Lord Caitanya's body and His ecstatic love of God were witnessed by everyone. Many people used to come see Him, and as soon as they saw Him, all their unhappiness and distress vanished. Many hundreds of thousands of people from various countries came to see the Lord, and after seeing Him they all chanted the Hare Krishna maha-mantra. Indeed, they

did not chant anything but the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*, and all of them became Lord Krishna's devotees. Thus the general populace was astonished. All the Vaisnava brahmanas residing in Sri Ranga-ksetra invited the Lord to their homes. Indeed, He had an invitation every day. Each day the Lord was invited by a different *brahmana*, but some of the *brahmanas* did not get the opportunity to offer Him lunch because the period of Caturmasya came to an end.

In the holy place of Sri Ranga-ksetra, a *brahmana* Vaishnava used to visit the temple daily and recite the entire text of the Bhagavad-Gita. The *brahmana* regularly read the 18 chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in great transcendental ecstasy, but because he could not pronounce the words correctly, people used to joke about him. Due to his incorrect pronunciation, people sometimes criticized him and laughed at him, but he did not care. He was full of ecstasy due to reading the *Bhagavad-Gita* and was personally very happy. While reading the book, the *brahmana* experienced transcendental bodily transformations. The hairs on his body stood on end, tears welled up in his eyes, and his body trembled and perspired as he read. Seeing this, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu became very happy.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked the *brahmana*, "My dear sir, why are you in such ecstatic love? Which portion of the *Bhagavad-Gita* gives you such transcendental pleasure?" The *brahmana* replied, "I am illiterate and therefore do not know the meaning of the words. Sometimes I read the *Bhagavad-Gita* correctly and sometimes incorrectly, but in any case I am doing this in compliance with the orders of my spiritual master." The *brahmana* continued, "Actually I only see Lord Krishna sitting on a chariot as Arjuna's charioteer. Taking the reins in His hands, He appears very beautiful and blackish. While seeing Lord Krishna sitting in a chariot and instructing Arjuna, I am filled with ecstatic happiness. As long as I read the *Bhagavad-Gita*, I simply see the Lord's beautiful features. It is for this reason that I am reading the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and my mind cannot be distracted from this."

After saying this, Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu embraced the *brahmana*, and the *brahmana*, catching the lotus feet of the Lord, began to cry. The *brahmana* said, "Upon seeing You, my happiness is doubled. I take it that You are the same Lord Krishna." The mind of the *brahmana* was purified by the revelation of Lord Krishna, and therefore he could understand the truth of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in all details. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu then taught the *brahmana* very thoroughly and requested him not to disclose the fact that He was Lord Krishna Himself. That *brahmana* became a great devotee of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and for four continuous months he did not give up the Lord's company.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu remained at the house of Venkata Bhatta and constantly talked with him about Lord Krishna. In this way He was very happy. Being a Vaisnava in the *Ramanuja-sampradaya*, Venkata Bhatta worshiped the Deities of Laksmi and Narayana. Seeing his pure devotion, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was very satisfied. Constantly associating with each other, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Venkata Bhatta gradually developed a friendly relationship. Indeed, sometimes they laughed and joked together. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu told the Bhattacarya, "*Your worshipable goddess of fortune, Laksmi, always remains on the chest of Narayana, and she is certainly the most chaste woman in the creation. However, my Lord is Lord Sri Krishna, a cowherd boy who is engaged in tending cows. Why is it that Laksmi, being such a chaste wife, wants to associate with My Lord? Just to associate with Krishna, Laksmi abandoned all transcendental happiness in Vaikuntha and for a long time accepted vows and regulative principles and performed unlimited austerities.*" Caitanya Mahaprabhu then said, "*O Lord, we do not know how the serpent Kaliya attained such an opportunity to be touched by the dust of Your lotus feet. Even the goddess of fortune, for this end, performed austerities for centuries, giving up all other desires and observing austere vows. Indeed, we do not know how the serpent Kaliya got such an opportunity.*"



Venkata Bhatta then said, *"Lord Krishna and Lord Narayana are one and the same, but the pastimes of Krishna are more relishable due to their sportive nature. Since Krishna and Narayana are the same personality, Laksmi's association with Krishna does not break her vow of chastity. Rather, it was in great fun that the goddess of fortune wanted to associate with Lord Krishna."* Venkata Bhatta continued, *"According to transcendental realization, there is no difference between the forms of Narayana and Krishna. Yet in Krishna there is a special transcendental attraction due to the conjugal mellow, and consequently He surpasses Narayana. This is the conclusion of transcendental mellows."* The goddess of fortune considered that her vow of chastity would not be damaged by her relationship with Krishna. Rather, by associating with Krishna she could enjoy the benefit of the rasa dance." Venkata Bhatta further explained, *"Mother Laksmi, the goddess of fortune, is also an enjoyer of transcendental bliss; therefore if she wanted to enjoy herself with Krishna, what fault is there? Why are You joking so about this?"*

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu replied, *"I know that there is no fault on the part of the goddess of fortune, but still she could not enter into the rasa dance. We hear this from the revealed scriptures. 'When Lord Sri Krishna was dancing with the gopis in the rasa-lila, the gopis were embraced around the neck by the Lord's arms. This transcendental favor was never bestowed upon the goddess of fortune or the other consorts in the spiritual world. Nor was such a thing ever imagined by the most beautiful girls in the heavenly planets, girls whose bodily luster and aroma exactly resemble the beauty and fragrance of lotus flowers. And what to speak of worldly women, who may be very, very beautiful according to material estimation?' But can you tell Me why the goddess of fortune, Laksmi, could not enter the rasa dance? The authorities of Vedic knowledge could enter the dance and associate with Krishna. 'Great sages conquer the mind and senses by practicing the mystic yoga system and controlling the breath. Thus engaging in mystic yoga, they see the Supersoul within their hearts and ultimately enter into impersonal Brahman. But even the enemies of the Supreme Personality of Godhead attain that position simply by thinking of the Supreme Lord. However, the damsels of Vraja, the gopis, being attracted by the beauty of Krishna, simply wanted to embrace Him and His arms, which are like serpents. Thus the gopis ultimately tasted the nectar of the lotus feet of the Lord. Similarly, we Upanisads can also taste the nectar of His lotus feet by following in the footsteps of the gopis.'"*

Having been asked by Caitanya Mahaprabhu why the goddess of fortune could not enter into the rasa dance whereas the authorities on Vedic knowledge could, Venkata Bhatta replied, *"I cannot enter into the mysteries of this behavior."* Venkata Bhatta then said, *"I am an ordinary human being. Since my intelligence is very limited and I am easily agitated, my mind cannot enter within the deep ocean of the pastimes of the Lord. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself. You know the purport of Your activities, and the person whom You enlighten can also understand Your pastimes."*

The Lord replied, *"Lord Krishna has a special characteristic: He attracts everyone's heart by the mellow of His personal conjugal love. By following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of the planet known as Vrajaloka or Goloka Vrindavana, one can attain the shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. However, in that planet the inhabitants do not know that Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There someone may accept Him as a son and sometimes bind Him to a grinding mortar. Someone else may accept Him as an intimate friend and, attaining victory over Him, playfully mount His shoulders. The inhabitants of Vrajabhumi know Krishna as the son of Maharaja Nanda, the King of Vrajabhumi, and they consider that they can have no relationship with the Lord in the rasa of opulence. One who worships the Lord by following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vrajabhumi attains Him in the transcendental planet of Vraja, where He is known as the son of Maharaja Nanda."*

Caitanya Mahaprabhu then quoted, “*‘The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, the son of mother Yasoda, is accessible to those devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service, but He is not as easily accessible to mental speculators, to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self.’*” The authorities in the Vedic literature who are known as the *sruti-ganas* worshiped Lord Krishna in the ecstasy of the *gopis* and followed in their footsteps. The personified authorities on the Vedic hymns acquired bodies like those of the *gopis* and took birth in Vrajabhumi. In those bodies they were allowed to enter into the Lord’s *rasa-lila* dance. Lord Krishna belongs to the cowherd community, and the *gopis* are the dear-most lovers of Krishna. Although the wives of the denizens of the heavenly planets are most opulent within the material world, neither they nor any other women in the material universe can acquire Krishna’s association. The goddess of fortune, Laksmi, wanted to enjoy Krishna and at the same time retain her spiritual body in the form of Laksmi. However, she did not follow in the footsteps of the *gopis* in her worship of Krishna. Vyasadeva, the supreme authority on Vedic literature, composed the verse beginning *‘nayam sukhapo bhagavan’* because no one can enter into the *rasa-lila* dance in any body other than that of a *gopi*.”

Before this explanation was given by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Venkata Bhatta thought that Sri Narayana was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thinking in this way, Venkata Bhatta believed that worship of Narayana was the supreme form of worship, superior to all other processes of devotional service, for it was followed by the Sri Vaisnava disciples of Ramanujacarya. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu had understood this misconception of Venkata Bhatta’s, and to correct it the Lord talked so much in a joking way.

The Lord then continued, “My dear Venkata Bhatta, please do not continue doubting. Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this is the conclusion of the Vedic literatures. Lord Narayana, the opulent form of Krishna, attracts the minds of the goddess of fortune and her followers. *‘All these incarnations of Godhead are either plenary portions or parts of the plenary portions of the purusa-avatars. But Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. In every age He protects the world through His different features when the world is disturbed by the enemies of Indra.’* Because Krishna has four extraordinary qualities not possessed by Lord Narayana, the goddess of fortune, Laksmi, always desires His company. You have recited the *sloka* beginning with *‘siddhantatas tv abhede ‘pi.’* That very verse is evidence that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *‘According to transcendental realization, there is no difference between the forms of Krishna and Narayana. Yet in Krishna there is a special transcendental attraction due to the conjugal mellow, and consequently He surpasses Narayana. This is the conclusion of transcendental mellows.’* The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, attracts the mind of the goddess of fortune, but Lord Narayana cannot attract the minds of the *gopis*. This proves the superexcellence of Krishna. To say nothing of Lord Narayana personally, Lord Krishna Himself appeared as Narayana just to play a joke on the *gopis*. Although Krishna assumed the four-armed form of Narayana, He could not attract the serious attention of the *gopis* in ecstatic love. *‘Once Lord Sri Krishna playfully manifested Himself as Narayana, with four victorious hands and a very beautiful form. When the gopis saw this exalted form, however, their ecstatic feelings were crippled. A learned scholar, therefore, cannot understand the gopis’ ecstatic feelings, which are firmly fixed upon the original form of Lord Krishna as the son of Nanda Maharaja. The wonderful feelings of the gopis in ecstatic parama-rasa with Krishna constitute the greatest mystery in spiritual life.’* ”

In this way Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu deflated the pride of Venkata Bhatta, but just to make him happy again, He spoke as follows. The Lord pacified Venkata Bhatta by saying, “Actually whatever I have said is by way of jest. Now you can hear from Me the conclusion of the *sastras*, in which every Vaisnava devotee has firm faith. There is no difference



between Lord Krishna and Lord Narayana, for They are of the same form. Similarly, there is no difference between the *gopis* and the goddess of fortune, for they also are of the same form. The goddess of fortune enjoys the association of Krishna through the *gopis*. One should not differentiate between the forms of the Lord, for such a conception is offensive. There is no difference between the transcendental forms of the Lord. Different forms are manifested due to different attachments of different devotees. Actually the Lord is one, but He appears in different forms just to satisfy His devotees. 'When the jewel known as vaidurya touches various other materials, it appears to be separated into different colors, and consequently its forms also appear different. Similarly, according to the meditational ecstasy of the devotee, the Lord, who is known as Acyuta ["the infallible one"], appears in different forms, although He is essentially one.' "

Venkata Bhatta then said, "I am an ordinary fallen living entity, but You are Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. The transcendental pastimes of the Lord are unfathomable, and I do not know anything about them. Whatever You say I accept as the truth. I have been engaged in the service of Laksmi-Narayana, and it is due to Their mercy that I have been able to see Your lotus feet. Out of Your causeless mercy You have told me of the glories of Lord Krishna. No one can reach the end of the opulence, qualities and forms of the Lord. I can now understand that devotional service unto Lord Krishna is the supreme form of worship. Out of Your causeless mercy You have made my life successful simply by explaining the facts."

After saying this, Venkata Bhatta fell down before the lotus feet of the Lord, and the Lord, out of His causeless mercy, embraced him. When the period of Caturmasya was completed, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took permission to leave from Venkata Bhatta, and after visiting Sri Ranga, He proceeded further toward southern India. Venkata Bhatta did not want to return home but also wanted to go with the Lord. It was with great endeavor that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu bade him farewell. When He did so, Venkata Bhatta fell down unconscious. Such are the pastimes of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the son of mother Saci, at Sri Ranga-ksetra.

[Ref. *Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madha-lila* chapter 9 verses 79-165]



**Sri Jagannatha Math at Srirangam**



**Sri Jagannatha Math at Srirangam**



**Their Lordships Sri Sri Jagannatha, Baladeva, Subhadra personally carved by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu at Sri Jagannatha Math at Srirangam**





**House of Venkata Bhatta, father of Sri Gopala Bhatta Gosvami at Srirangam**



**Personal Deities worshipped by Venkata Bhatta at his house in Srirangam**



## Personal Deities worshipped by Venkata Bhatta at his house in Srirangam



**Year 2010 marked the 500<sup>th</sup> Year celebrations of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's visit to Srirangam**

### **2. Sri Adi Narayana Perumal Temple at Gopurapatti**

Gopurapatti is a village 16 km from Srirangam near Manasanallur between two rivers Peruvalavan and Kamba (these have gone into extinction and are currently seen in the form of a small canal) is the Adi Nayaka Perumal temple in Gopurapatti, where the *moolavar* is seen in a *Bala Sayana* posture with a *Measuring Instrument*. Though that village is very small, it protected Vaishnavism more than any other town in Tamil Nadu.

In 1323, Ulugh Khan, a Moghul king attacked Srirangam. During this period, lasting close to 50 years some of the residents fled the place but many others stayed on to fight the invaders. And at that time, there were 12,000 Vaishnavas in Srirangam. Amongst those 11,250 were massacred. The remaining 750 Vaishnavas somehow or other escaped to the village Gopurapatti. According to Koyilozhugu, an authentic record of events relating to Srirangam, Sri Vaishnavites were scattered during the invasion. Divided into various teams, each team took upon various responsibilities for protection of the temple. Thus, a team led by Pillailokachariar took up an important mission of protecting the Deities and treasures of the temple. They took the temple's processional Deity of *Azhagiya Manavalan* into safe custody. A stone wall was built across the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Ranganatha Swamy to protect it from any damage.

In Gopurapatti, in the year 1320, there was the installation of Ranganatha similar to that in Srirangam. In that village also, two rivers are flowing and Ranganatha is staying in the midst facing south. So the Vaishnavas who escaped to that place, performed the final rites for the Vaishnavas who were killed in Srirangam. Even today the people of Gopurapatti remember the Vaishnavas who were beheaded in Srirangam and continue to offer *shraddha*. After 1498 no proper worship took place in the temple. There was one more attack and the temple was destroyed. 512 years later, the temple was renovated again in 2010.

In memory of the Vaishnavas killed, every year, during the No Moon day in the Tamil Calendar month of Aadi, Tharpanam takes place on the banks of the Peruvalavan River in Gopurapatti. It was a km from here at the Sundara Raja Perumal Koil in Azhagiya Manavalam that Namperumal, the Utsava deity of Srirangam, was safeguarded during



those years and was taken back to the Srirangam temple at the end of the battle against the invaders.

*Measuring Instrument:* There was a lot of land belonging to the Srirangam temple in the area around Azhagiya Manavalam and Gopurapatti. It was here at the Adi Nayaka temple that the farmers congregated to measure the rice they would present every month to the Srirangam temple. Hence, the Lord here is seen with a measuring tool.

*Sri Adi Nayaka Perumal* faces south with its feet gently wide apart with a little space. Legend has it that the little space is aimed to hold an infant. The temple was in a dilapidated condition, including the presiding deity were found nearly abandoned. A team of devotees floated Adhinayaka Perumal Kainkarya Sabha and renovated the temple. The Samprokshanam was performed on August 27, 2010.



**Their Lordships Sri Adi Nayaka Perumal at Gopurapatti**

### **3. Sri Pundarikaksha Perumal Temple at Thiruvellarai**

*Thiruvellarai or Sri Pundarikaksha Perumal Temple* is 14 km from Srirangam main temple. This is a very beautiful temple built by great Sibi Chakravarthi, king of Ayodhya in Treta Yuga, seven generations before the appearance Lord Ramacandra. The word *Vellarai* means white rock. Owing to the presence of white rocks in the region, the place is historically referred as Thiru Vellara. The temple is on a white rock hill of 50 feet height. Temple has beautiful deity of *Lord Pundarikaksha*. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> temple in 108 *divya-deshams* dedicated to Vishnu, who is worshipped as Pundarikaksha and His consort Lakshmi as Pankajavalli. This temple dates back to a time much before Srirangam temple as can be seen from the fact that Sibi, the forefather of Ramacandra, built this temple. There are 18 steps to the temple representing the 18 chapters of *Bhagavad-Gita*. The next 4 steps to entrance represent the *Four Vedas*. Then after worshipping the *Bali-peeta*, one has to cross five steps representing the *panchabhutas* called earth, water, fire, air and ether.

It is said that Surya and Chandra come here and perform *chamara seva* to the Lord. Legends say that the eyes of the Deity of Hanuman in the temple complex are growing bigger and wider each year. This can be known from unusually big eyes of Hanumanji

compared to the size of deity. This is the place where the famous verse “Om pavitra pavitro va...” had its origin. Another belief is that no Sri Vaishnava can achieve perfection without visiting Thiruvellarai. Hence, there is this tradition at the temple to call Thiruvellarai Kandeero- Thiruvellarai Kanden Aiyaa (the devotees informing the Lord that they have seen Thiruvellarai and that they are now ready/eligible for going back to Godhead), a voice that is said to echo to the Lord up there in Vaikuntha.

*Pastime:* Once, Lord Visnu being pleased with Laxmi requested her to ask for a boon. Being fully satisfied to get a place on Lord’s heart, She did not ask for anything. On being persistently asked by the Lord, she then requested that she be granted the leading rights at some temples, as She felt that the Lord gets priority over her in all the temples.

Meanwhile, Markandeya was destined to die at age 16. When Yama came to take him, he clutched on to the *Siva-lingam* at Thirukadaiyur. Pleased with this, Lord Siva blessed him that he will remain there forever as 16. After enjoying life to the full, Markandeya once again prayed to Lord Siva asking for deliverance. He was guided by Siva to go to Thiruvellarai to invoke the blessing of Lord Vishnu.

King Sibi (Lord Rama’s ancestor) came here with a big army with the intention of killing the Lankan King Ravana. While here, he encountered a white pig which gave the army a fight. Angered at this, Sibi chased the white pig. After stopping at 5 places, the pig disappeared into a pit. The king soon realized that the white pig was not an ordinary one.

King Sibi then approached Markandeya Rishi who was performing penance here. He asked Sibi to pray to Lord Vishnu. The Muni told the king how lucky he was to see the lord in the form of the swine while he himself was waiting long for Lord’s *darshan* and so he advised the king to perform milk *abishek* to an anthill near the pit. The Lord in this Deity form of *Pundarikaksha* appeared before the Muni and the King.

Answering Sibi’s prayers, an invisible voice asked him not to pursue his quest to defeat Ravana and that he go back to his kingdom as time had not come for Ravana to be defeated yet and that he himself will be born later to defeat Ravana. A disappointed King Sibi pleaded with the Lord that he could not possibly go back empty handed, without fulfilling the purpose for which he had come. The Lord asked Sibi to fulfill the wishes of goddess Lakshmi by building a temple here that would give Her the first rights at all festivities. It is also here that Lord Vishnu then gave *darshan* and deliverance to Markandeya.

Only in three *divya-desam* temples does the Goddess get the first rights over the Lord - Nachiyar temple in Thiru Naraiyur, Aandal temple in Srivilliputhur and here at Thiruvellarai. As per the boon of the Lord, Mother Shenbagavalli (Lakshmi) took the premier place in the temple and comes before the lord in palanquin during the festival occasions.





### **Sri Pundarikaksha Perumal Temple at Thiruvellarai**

There are 18 steps to the temple representing the 18 chapters of *Bhagavad-Gita*. The next 4 steps to entrance represent the *Four Vedas*.



### **Lord Sri Pundarikaksha Perumal at Thiruvellarai**

#### **4. Uthamar Kovil (also known as Thirukkarambanoor or Bhikshandar Kovil)**

*Uthamar Kovil* (also known as *Thirukkarambanoor* or *Bhikshandar Kovil*) is 10 km from Srirangam. This temple is unique as there are Deities of Lord Vishnu, Lord Siva and Lord Brahma. Lord Vishnu emerged as a Kadambha tree at this place, giving the name "Kathambanur", which later became "Karambanur". The temple is commonly called "Uthamar Kovil" after the name of the presiding deity. The temple is also called Bhikshandar Kovil as the Lord Siva is present in the form of Bhishadanar (a mendicant) and believed to have attained cure by worshiping Vishnu at this place. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> temple in 108 *divya-deshams* dedicated to Vishnu worshipped as *Purushothama Perumal*.

**Pastime:** As per pastime, Brahma and Siva both had originally five heads. Parvathi, the wife of Siva once got confused and performed *patha pooja* (ablution of feet, considered an act of respect) to Brahma instead of Siva. Siva got enraged and cut off one of the heads of Brahma. The cut head got stuck in his hand of Siva on account of a curse of Brahma. To get rid of the sin, Siva worshipped Vishnu at this place as Bhikshadana, where a part of his sin was relieved. He got his curse fully relieved after visiting Vishnu at Thirukandiyur and taking a holy dip in the temple tank, Kamala Pushkarani at *Hara Saabha Vimocchana Perumal Temple*. After the incident, the tank came to be known as *Kapala Theertham* (*kapala* indicates skull). Siva was pleased and he built the Hara Sabha Vimochana temple and also built a temple for himself near it.

As per another pastime, once Lord Vishnu wanted to test the devotion of Brahma. He raised as a Kadhamba tree in the place and Brahma, knowing this, started his worship practice with *Thirumanjanam* (ablution). The water from the ablution filled a tank nearby, which came to be known as "Kathamba Theertham". Vishnu was satisfied with the devotion of Brahma and gave a boon to Brahma to have a shrine in this place. Siva wanted to get rid of the sin holding the cut head of Brahma and went on a sacred trip. While coming to this place, Vishnu requested his consort Lakshmi to give alms to Siva. Siva's grail was filled by the alms and Lakshmi came to be known as *Poornavalli Thayar* (the one who filled the grail).



**The shine of temple seen with the temple tree, Kadhali Tree (red banana (red banana))**





**Lord Sri Purushothama Perumal at Uthamar Kovil**

### 5. Sri Anbil Sundararaja Perumal Temple

*Anbil Sundararaja Perumal Temple (also known as Sri Vadivazhagiya Nambi Perumal)* is 20 km from Srirangam temple. This is the 3rd temple in 108 divya-deshams dedicated to Vishnu worshipped as *Sundaramoorthaye Poornaya Perumal*. This temple is considered to be very old (some say it is almost 6000 years old). There are numerous inscriptions at this temple which indicate the political and religious history in those days. There are inscriptions mentioning that this is the appearance place of saint Valmiki. It is believed that Lord blessed him before he relocated to north India.

**Pastime:** Sage Mandaka was doing penance at this place. He had to powers to reside both in water and land. Sage Durvasa once came to meet Mandaka Rsi but had to wait long as the latter was in deep meditation, under the river. Durvasa, who is known for his instant anger, cursed Mandaka Rsi turning him into a frog. Mandaka requested Durvasa on the penance he had to do to get relieved off the curse. Durvasa explained him that the curse was on account of the sin he committed in his previous birth and Vishnu would appear to him to relieve him. For 48 days he observed a *vrata* and prayed to Lord regularly. Lord Vishnu appeared before him and redeemed him from the curse. This *pushkarani* has therefore been named after the *rsi* who got free from being a *Mandukam* (frog).

As per another legend, once there was a discussion between Lord Brahma and Saint Valmiki about the beautifulness of Lord Vishnu in His *sayana* posture. This conversation led them to the fight. Lord Vishnu appeared before them and said "*in sayana posture I am beautiful in Thiru Anbil*". So Lord Vishnu here is worshipped as "Vadhivazhagiya Nambi".

This *divya desam* is also known as Premapuri and Triveni. It is known as Triveni as the three rivers Kaveri, Savitri and Phalguni are said to have merged into one and flow near this *divya desam*. Savitri and Phalguni are said to be flowing underground. Hence this place is also known as *Dakshina Gaya*. Those who cannot go to *Gaya* in North India, can perform the *shraddha* ceremony for their forefathers here with an equal effect.



**Sri Anbil Sundararaja Perumal**



**Sri Anbil Sundararaja Perumal Temple**

## **6. Azhagiya Manavala Perumal Temple or Kamalavalli Nachiyar Kovil at Uraiur**

*Azhagiya Manavala Perumal Temple* is 6 km south of Srirangam temple at Uraiur, a *divya desam* whose pastime relates to the love story of Kamalavalli Nachiyar and her wedlock with the handsome young lad Ranganatha of Srirangam.

**Pastime:** Lord Vishnu was pleased by the worship of the childless Chola king Nanda Chola and blessed the king that Lakshmi, His consort, would be born to him and at appropriate age, He would get married with her. The king found the child in a lotus tank while hunting in a forest. Since she was born out of Lotus, the Goddess here is called Kamalavalli Nachiyar [Kamala means Lotus]. As years went by, Kamalavalli grew into a beautiful young girl. Time came when Kamalavalli fell in love with Lord Vishnu in the form of Ranganath, the presiding deity of Srirangam Ranganatha Swamy temple. Chola king readily got her married to Ranganatha. Delighted at this, Nanda Chola built a temple at Uraiur to celebrate the (home) coming of Lord Ranganatha to Uraiur to take the hand of his daughter.



Every year in the month of Panguni, a significant event takes place at the Uraiyur temple. Festival *uthsav* deity of Lord Ranganatha, in all His splendour, leaves the Srirangam temple at 4am to take the 6 km journey across the Kaveri in a golden palanquin to meet his beloved Kamalavalli Nachiyar for the 'Kalyana Utsavam' (marriage festivities). On this auspicious day the entire marriage formalities between Lord Ranganatha and Kamalavalli Nachiyar is enacted at the Uraiyur Temple. Lord Ranganatha takes the trip back to Srirangam across the Kaveri that same night. The event is celebrated as Servai festival every year. Since Lord Vishnu appeared as Azhagiya Manavalan, meaning a beautiful groom, the temple is called Azhagiya Manavalan Temple. At the Uraiyur temple, Kamalavalli Nachiyar is seen in a grand sitting posture, all set to get married. Being the handsome man in wedding attire, Lord Ranganatha here is called 'Azhagiya Mana Vaalan'. This is the 2nd temple in 108 *divya-deshams* dedicated to Vishnu worshipped as *Azhagiya Manavala Perumal*.



**Namperumal - Kamalavalli Nachiyar Serthi at Worayur Nachiyar Koil**

## **7. Thiru Koviladi - Appakudathan Temple**

*Appakkudathan Perumal Temple* or Thirupper Nagar is 25 km east of Srirangam. This place is named after 'Appam', a traditional sweet rice cake which is a favorite of the Lord here. Deity is called Appala Ranganatha Perumal, a form similar to Lord Ranganatha Swamy at Srirangam.

**Pastime:** Once a king by name Ubhamanyu earned the wrath of sage Durvasa and lost all his physical strength. To get rid of the curse, he was asked to feed one lakh people every day. One day, Lord Vishnu disguised Himself as an old man, appeared before the king and asked for a meal. The king went on donating and the old man consumed all the food prepared for the people. The king was shocked and bewildered at this strange act. The old man asked for a kudam (pot) of Neyyaappam (a sweatmeal), stating that only it can fulfill his hunger. The king fulfilled the wish and later realised that it was Vishnu who had appeared as the old man. The king was relieved of the sage's curse by the blessings of Vishnu. Because of this pastime, Lord Vishnu is called "Appakkudathan" in the temple. It is believed that this temple is where sage Markandeya was liberated from his curse from Yama (god of death), who cursed Markandeya to die at 16 years old. The central deity is Ranganatha. The place is called "Koviladi" because it is located downstream of the

Srirangam Ranganatha Swamy temple, which is referred as kovil in Vaishnava tradition. The temple is called as "Tiruppernagar" because the region was called "Per Nagar" during Chola times. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> temple in 108 *divya-deshams* dedicated to Vishnu worshipped as *Appala Ranganatha Perumal*.



**Appakkudathan Perumal - Thiru Koviladi**

### **8. Sri Prasanna Venkatachalapathy Temple at Gunaseelam**

This is a very important temple situated 18 km from Srirangam on Tiruchirappalli-Salem road near a tourist spot of Mukkambu. The deity of this temple is called *Prasana Venkateshwara*, who is a sculptural form of Lord Vishnu.

**Pastime:** In Bhavishyottra Puranam, one finds reference to the significance of this temple in Gunaseela Mahaatmiyam. Thaalpiya Maharishi along with his disciple Gunaseela Rsi once went to the Himalayas. On his way back, Gunaseela Rsi stayed back at Tirupati and was so attracted to Lord Venkatachalapathy that he wanted the Lord to appear in Gunaseelam and bless the devotees. He came back, bathed in the Cauvery and undertook severe penance here in his ashram in Gunaseelam. Impressed with his sincerity, the Lord appeared before him along with Goddess and promised to remain here till the end of *Kali Yuga*. Pleased with the *darshan* of Prasanna Venkatachalapathy, Gunaseela Maharishi continued to offer his daily poojas to the lord from his ashram here. At the end of the *Dwapara Yuga*, the Gunaseela Maharishi's Guru wanted him to go to Naimisharanya. Gunaseela Rishi designated his young disciple to continue the daily poojas. However, floods in the Cauvery and dangerous animals in the forest led the disciple to flee the place and thus the poojas came to an abrupt end. The Lord decided to hide himself in a pit. After several years, Chola king Nyana Varma, who ruled this place with Uraiyur as the capital, used to visit Gunaseelam regularly. Every day, cowherds would milk the cows from near the pit and carry the milk all the way back to his court.

One day, to everyone's shock, the milk that was filled to the brim of the pot vanished all of a sudden. An invisible voice wanted the king to dissolve the pit by pouring milk. The king brought in his army and used thousands of liters of milk to complete this exercise. Once dissolved, Vaikuntha Vasudevan is said to have appeared before the king as Prasanna



Venkatesan. As per the king's wishes, the Lord agreed to remain here till the end of *Kali Yuga* and help fulfil all the prayers of the devotees, who visit this temple. Delighted at the *darshan* of Prasanna Venkatachalapathy, the king shifted from Uraiur to Kallur, (this place was then called 'Badra Chakra Pattinam') near Gunaseelam and built the beautiful Gunaseelam temple and laid down the process of the daily poojas as directed by Prasanna Venkatesan. He also allocated a lot of land for the temple as well as funds to undertake the daily pooja formalities. This temple attracts lot of pilgrims and people also believe that worshipping the deity here helps one to cure mental and physical ailments.



**Sri Prasanna Venkatachalapathy Temple at Gunaseelam**

#### **9. Kattu Narasimha Perumal Temple (Azhagiya Singar - *handsome jungle God*)**

The Kattu Narasimhaperumal Temple is situated in Srirangam at a distance of 1 km from the Srirangam railway station. It is also known as Azhagiya Singar temple. The temple predates the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam and is one of the oldest temples in the city.

*Pastime:* This *kshetram* was a forest thousands of years ago, surrounded by the two rivers – Cauvery in the South and Coleroon in the North, and inhabited only by the rishis and their families. Time and again, wild animals would attack the families of the rishis and consume them for a meal. While the rishis had the power to burn the animals just by their looks, they would not forego the fruits of their penance by killing these wild animals. Instead they undertook a more severe form of penance invoking the blessings of Lord Narasimha. Pleased with their prayers, Lord Narasimha appeared here providing *darshan* to these rishis. As per their request, he stayed here with Goddess Lakshmi protecting the lives of all those who offer their sincere prayers at this place.

The place was a jungle in the olden days with elephant menace. Elephants cannot be killed according to scriptures as it would put people in a circle of sins. People were struggling for safety. They prayed to Narasimha building a temple for him. The animals slowly left the place. Hence the Lord is named *Kattuzhagiasingar (handsome jungle God)*.

Centuries ago, with this temple being in the midst of a forest and with minimal human existence, it was considered unsafe and hence the *Utsava deity* was placed inside the Koorathaazhvan Sannidhi at the Srirangam Ranganatha temple. That tradition has come to stay and today one finds the *Utsava deity* of Lord Narasimha not at the Kaattazhagivya Singa Perumal Koil but at the Srirangam Ranganatha temple. Old time residents say that

this place was very much like a forest till the early 1970s. It is only in the last 3 decades that there has been development around the Kaatazhagiya Singar temple.



**Lord Nrsimhadeva at Kattu Narasimha Perumal Temple**

## **Life and Teachings of Sripad Ramanujacarya** **by HH Radhanath Swami Maharaj**

### **The four Sampradayas:**

Towards the beginning of the creation Lord Narayana spoke to Brahma, Lord Narayana spoke to Lakshmi that pure devotional service is also given to Rudra and to the four Kumaras. And it is explained by all great and authorized Vaisnavas that without receiving the knowledge from one of these four *sampradayas*, true understanding of Krishna consciousness cannot take place. In fact Srila Rupa Goswami quotes from the *sastra* that without being initiated and receiving *siksha* from the unbroken lines of these four *sampradayas* one cannot understand Krishna Consciousness, one cannot understand what is *Vaikuntha*. So if we have read in *Bhagavad-Gita* as time goes on you will meet these great *sampradayas*: *evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh (Bhagavad-Gita 4.2)*.

In the eyes of the masses and therefore either the Lord Himself appears or He sends one of his most empowered representatives to create a spiritual revival or to re-establish the



real spirit of *bhakti* that is the essence of every *sampradaya*. So through the *Rudra sampradaya* Vishnu Swami appeared, through the *Kumar Sampradaya* Nimbarkacharya appeared, through the *Brahma sampradaya* Sri Madhavacharya appeared and to re-establish the truth and the essence of the spirit of what Lord Narayana spoke to Lakshmi Devi in the mood of pure devotional service Sri Ramanujacharya appeared.

### ***Yajna performed for the birth of a son:***

We read about his books it was at a time when the greatest of all of the *acaryas* of South India were Sri Yamunacharya and he had his headquarters in Srirangam. Sri Yamunacharya came in this great line of *Sri Sampradaya* and he made his teachings in line with the *Alvars*. *The Alvars were very, very great devotees who lived some hundreds of years before and they wrote beautiful poems glorifying the Lord*. Now one of these great disciples of Yamunacharya was a *sannyasi* of the name of Sailapurna. Sailapurna had two sisters one was Kantimati and one is Diptimati. Sailapurna helped to arrange the marriage of his 2 sisters. After they were married he went to Srirangam and completely dedicated his life only to the service of the lotus feet of his *Guru*. Kantimati married a very, very great *brahmana* of the name of Asuri Kesavacharya and he was very expert in performing *yajnas* he was also known as Sarvakrati and they had one great anxiety in their hearts that they had no son. He had great faith in the lotus feet of Lord Narayana. He was a very good devotee, very advanced devotee. He decided that he would go to the temple of Parthasarthy which is close to the ocean in the modern day Madras. In those days that area was called Brindaranya and he performed a wonderful *yajna* for the pleasure of Lord Parthasarthy and requested that a son would be born and it is explained while there the night of that *yajna* the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him that, "You and your wife should return to your native place and an incarnation of myself will be born to you". So with great happiness and confidence he returned home.

### ***Birth of Ramanuja:***

Some months later Kantimati gave birth to a beautiful and auspicious child, it was in the year 1017 of the Christian era. Just at that same time her sister Diptimati also gave birth to a baby child. After few days the two sisters came together also bringing their children together and they were both just merged in great happiness. When this news came to Srirangam to Sailapurna, he decided to come to give the blessings of his *Gurudeva* to these two nephews of him. They were living in the place called Bhutipuri and when he came there he saw the beautiful qualities of this son of Kantimati and he could understand that the prophecy given by the great, great devotee Nammalvar has been fulfilled. What he prophesized that Laxmana the brother of Ramacandra would take birth as a great *acarya* to deliver all the people. So he named this child Ramanuja which is another name of Laxmana which means following in the brother of Sri Rama and he named Diptimati's son Govinda. Their parents were very, very great devotees and very much cultured *brahmana's* so they performed all the *samskaras* to their children and from the very birth Ramanuja was just an ocean of good qualities very obedient, very humble, very submissive, very, very learned, very anxious to always hear and learn more and more about the Lord. In fact he was a natural devotee of Lord Narayana in his earliest ages.

### ***Early life of Ramanuja:***

When he was about 16 years old, his father very much insisted that he married, so he got married. Just one month after his marriage his father died; he was only 16 years old. So it was very difficult for them to remain in the same place without father. Ramanuja being very responsible son as well as husband, he arranged for a house in Kanchipuram which was a close city and there they resided. Now during his very earlier years before even his marriage there was a great devotee who was also a disciple of Yamunacarya, his name was Kancipurna and he used to go from one village to another to worship the deity and on the way he would always pass the home of Ramanujacarya. Ramanujacarya was always very, very attracted by this person's great, great love and devotion. In fact although this person Kancipurna was born in a *sudra* family even great, great *brahmanas* would worship his lotus feet because he had such simple and humble devotion and he was always simply anxious to please the Lord. He worshiped the deity of Varadaraja which is in Vishnu Kanchi (Kanchipuram). What he would do is just very simple worship, he would fan the deity, in the summer he would dip the fan in water and fan him. He would bring the best nicest fruits to the deity and in this way he had such a loving relationship that it is said that he would be able to have conversation with the Lord and it was known by many great devotees that whatever Lord wanted people to know, he would speak through Kancipurna. So Ramanuja was very, very happy and much honoured to have the *darshan* of this person from time to time and they became very, very close and loving friends.

One day Kancipurna was passing and Ramanuja invited him to his home and when he invited him to his home they offered him some prasada and then Ramanuja wanted to massage this great saint's lotus feet and Kancipurna said "No, no you cannot massage my feet, you are the highest caste *brahmana* and I am a *sudra* and I am a very fallen soul. This is not proper for you to massage my feet." Ramanuja replied, "If my being born as a *brahmana* is an impediment in serving the lotus feet of the great devotee of the Lord, then I consider this *brahmana* birth to be a curse and utterly useless."

Because when someone is a great devotee of the Lord there is no question of caste distinction. A devotee of the Lord wherever he is born, however he is born and deliver all of the world with pure devotional service. So Kancipurna was very much happy to hear this young boy's complete faith in the process of *bhakti*.

### ***Discipleship under Yadavaprakash:***

After they moved to Sri Kanchipuram, Ramanuja was sent to the *gurukul* the *ashram* of one very, very great learned *acaryas* at least he was famous as such. His name was Yadavaprakash. Yadavaprakash was a follower of Shankaracarya, he was a staunch *mayavadi* but he was very highly learned. So Ramanuja very much wanted to understand the *Vedas*. He was so intelligent that whatever he would hear he would immediately learn and understand and grasp. Whenever he would hear the *mayavad* conclusions of his teacher it would just cause too much pain to his heart but because by nature he was very mild, very gentle and very humble he would just somehow or other restrain and tolerate his feelings.



### ***Ramanuja correcting his guru:***

One day it is explained that Yadavaprakash after the classes he asked Ramanuja to stay back because Ramanuja was his favourite and dear most of all students because he was so obedient and so humble and so anxious to learn and so capable of learning. So he sent all the other students away he asked Ramanuja to massage his legs with oil. Ramanuja was very humbly massaging his legs and then one student came back and he asked his teacher that, "I have a question in terms of one of the *slokas* from the Chandogya Upanishad, here it is described that the lotus eyes of Lord Narayana they are the beautiful reddish colour. Can you explain this in more detail?"

So his *guru* explained according to Shankaracarya's verse that the meaning of this is that he used Sanskrit that "The eyes of Narayana are beautiful reddish colour like the rear end of a monkey." He was going on explaining in this way and Ramanujacarya when he heard this blaspheme of Lord Narayana just tears started flowing from his eyes and tears were hot and they started falling on the body of his *guru* and his *guru* felt these burning hot tears and he looked up and saw Ramanuja in great distress crying.

So Yadavaprakash said, "Why are you crying?"

He said, "Because I cannot tolerate hearing this blaspheme of my Lord."

"What do you mean?"

He said, "How could you compare lotus eyes of Lord Narayana to the rear end of a monkey?"

He said, "This is Shankaracarya's explanation, I am repeating. Can you think of something better?"

Then Ramanuja very, very expertly and poetically explained the same Sanskrit verse to explain that the real meaning is that, "*His eyes are red like the red lotus that is in the presence of the shining sun.*"

At that time Yadavaprakash became very angry, he said, "You think you know better than our *acarya* Shankar? You think you know better than your own *guru*." At that time there became a great tension between the two of them.

### ***Growing tension with Yadavaprakash:***

On another occasion Yadavaprakash was giving a lecture and he was explaining how the form of the Lord is illusion, how the Supreme Absolute Truth is *sat-cit-ananda* and how he is beyond *sat-cit-ananda*. When Ramanuja was hearing this, he could not control himself, he stood up and he gave a counter explanation which completely defeated his *guru* and his *guru* became very angry. He said, "Why do you even come here to learn from me?" He chastised him, very seriously he said, "You are very impudent, you think you can challenge your spiritual master you are a rascal."

Yadavaprakash became very worried, that this boy he is so learned and he has a pure heart, so much devotion to Narayana that *he will completely destroy the philosophy of*

monism, he will completely discredit Shankaracarya if he is allowed to continue on. He called some of his disciples to a secret meeting to discuss what to do about him. One of the disciples said, "Why don't you expel him from school?"

Another disciple said, "That is even worse, if he expels him from school, he will start his own school and the way he is speaking his school will completely defeat and discredit all of our *guru's* philosophy and make an ass out of our *guru*."

So then the *guru* said, "The only way that we can protect our mission is this boy must be killed."

So they planned out a way to kill him. He said, "I will take all of my students on a pilgrimage to the Ganges in northern India. This will take many, many months and during that time we will figure out some way to kill him and then when we come back we will tell them that during the trip he fell ill and he died and then no one will question us."

### ***Yadavaprakash's attempt to murder Ramanuja:***

So they planned out this trip to the Ganges and Ramanuja when he heard that they were going to Ganga and *guru* is taking us on a pilgrimage he became very, very happy ready to go. And his cousin Govinda also decided that he would go because he was also a student. So they all went together and when they came to one place near the Vindhya Mountain, it is explained that they were in the forest just living in forest beside a river and Yadavaprakash sent Ramanuja out to do some errands to collect some flowers and so forth to bring back for worship and while he was away, *gurudeva* told the disciples: "This is a proper time that we should kill him in the forest, no one will ever know."

While he was speaking it was just about evening, the sun was about to set and Govinda happened to be in the trees in the forest nearby and he heard the whole diabolical plan. Govinda was very much disturbed and he approached Ramanuja in the forest and he told him that, "You should not come back because Yadavaprakash and his disciples they were so envious and fearful of you that they planned to kill you on this very evening."

So Ramanuja began to run through the forest to get away and when he did not come for a long time, the *guru* and the disciples they all started calling him and searching everywhere. When night was beginning to fall they realized that he must have been killed by some wild animals and therefore he must be dead because they didn't suspect that he knew. So they were all very happy and joyful in their hearts but because Govinda was there they pretended as if they were very sad and Yadavaprakash began to preach to Govinda, the difference between the body and the soul and how you should not lament over the death of a body because the soul is eternal and Govinda was listening patiently.

### ***Protected by the Lord:***

Ramanuja was running through the forest and he was very young, he was only 18 years old and he didn't know where he was. He was a long, long way from home, so many hundreds and hundreds of miles from home. He became very fearful and then in his fearful condition the night was coming and in the jungle he did not know where to go, where to



not go. *He started to think that Lord Narayana is the Supreme controller of everyone and I am his devotee so why should I be afraid, He will protect me. And just upon remembering the mercy of Lord Narayana all of his fear was vanished and just after he came to that conclusion of taking shelter of lotus feet of Narayana.* He saw a hunter with his wife walking through the forest. They were very surprised to see this young man, "Where are you going?"

He said, "I am going to Kanchipuram, but I do not know how to get there. It is such a long way." They said, "We are also going to Kanchipuram. We had already been travelled for over one month such a long distance."

Ramanuja said, "So far away, why are you going to Kanchipuram?" The hunter said, "Well, you see we kill birds for profession myself and my wife and this is a very sinful activity, so we must go to Rameswaram and Kanchipuram to perform *yajna* and to worship the lotus feet of the Lord to neutralize the offense of our sins. But we will guide you all the way back."

So they walked for about an hour, they came to a river bank. He started the fire, the wife of this hunter said she was very thirsty and the hunter said, "Now it is too dark but there is a well very close nearby and from that well we will get water in the morning."

But the next morning they came upon that well and Ramanuja climbed down the mountain to where that well was and he brought water to the lady and she drank but she was still thirsty so he went back and forth bringing more and more water as she drank. One time when he was bringing it, she disappeared she was no longer there. He brought the water up, she was no longer there and the hunter was not there, no one was there and he was wondering 'how will I find Kanchipuram now'? And just as he was thinking that way he looked above the trees he saw big beautiful temples, 'What city is this?' Then he saw someone passing by toward the well. He said, "What is this city?"

They said, "You don't know this city? It is the famous city of Kanchipuram. And you are one of the bright students of Yadavaprakash, you live here. How you do not know the city of Kanchipuram." Then that person walked away.

*Ramanujacarya could understand that, that hunter and his wife were Lakshmi and Narayana. He got that realization from within his heart. When he was lost in a helpless condition in the forest, he prayed that the shelter of Lord Narayana always protects his devotees. So, on the basis of that humble prayer Lord Narayana personally came with Lakshmi to bring him back to his home. Then he just sat by the well weeping and crying in ecstasy thinking of the great mercy he had just received from the Lord. And then he went back to his home, his mother was very happy to see him, she was thinking it would be at least 6 months but he had returned only after about a month and he told her the story, why he returned early, how Yadavaprakash was planning to kill him. So she was simultaneously very sad to hear this but very happy that Lord Narayana saved her son. Well, he was at home and then some months later, Yadavaprakash returned and*

when he found Ramanuja was at home with his mother, he went to the house and pretended to be very, very joyful, very happy, "Oh! We thought you were dead, we see that you are alive. You have been saved by the Lord." He and his disciples made a big show of showing great happiness. But they knew that there was something else. In this way Yadavaprakash he saw that Ramanuja was becoming so, so incredibly influential that he wanted him to return to his school so that he could find some other means. So he returned for some time.

### ***Yamunacarya visits Kanchipuram:***

On another occasion there was a philosophical confrontation. Yadavaprakash became so angry that he just had to kick him away. It is explained that at one time when he was again the student of Yadavaprakash, Yamunacarya came from Srirangam for the *darshan* of Varadraj and when he was walking through Kanchipuram, he saw this beautiful sight of Ramanuja. Now Ramanujacarya had already written a particular commentary on a *sloka* from *Upanishads* which completely defeated Shankar's philosophy and that *sloka* became so famous, Yadavaprakash hated it. When it came to Srirangam and Yamunacarya read it, he thought, 'this person is divinely empowered'. So he saw Ramanuja and Yadavaprakash had his hand on Ramanuja's shoulder and Yamunacarya who was then over 100 years old, he asked one of his followers, "Who is that?"

He said, "That is Ramanujacarya." He said, "He is the one that wrote that beautiful commentary establishing the eternality of *jiva* and establishing the pure *bhakti* of the highest goal of life." "Yes, that is him." He said, "What is he doing with this *mayavadi* Yadavaprakash, rascal?" He said, "He is his student."

Yamunacarya was just so anxious to run out and embrace Ramanujacarya but Yamunacarya would never associate with *mayavadis* so he began to offer prayers to Lord Narayana. He began to offer prayers that, "Please, rescue this Ramanuja, such a wonderful devotee, rescue him from this terrible, terrible association it is so contaminating to the heart and bring him again to your lotus feet and the association of *Vaishnavas*." Yamunacarya after offering this prayer, he went for the *darshan* and returned back to Srirangam. Then there was a big confrontation and Ramanuja ultimately left his *guru* his teacher.

### ***Ramanuja desired to be initiated by Kancipurna:***

After Ramanuja left, he desired to be initiated by Kancipurna, who was a great *Vaishnava* but happened to be a *sudra*. When Kancipurna came they would meet regularly and Ramanuja said, "Now I am no longer associating with this Yadavaprakash, so please, I beg you to initiate me and I will be your humble disciple."

Kancipurna was very humble, he said, "How can I initiate you? How is it possible? You are so learned, you are a great *brahmana* and I am a low class. I have no real devotion how can I initiate you? It is not possible."



At that time Kancipurna, he went to the temple of Varadaraj and he said, "I have dedicated my life only to be Your humble simple servant that's all I want. But now somehow or other You are putting me in situations where great *brahmanas* want to be my disciples and You want to put me in situation of being an *acarya*. I do not like this at all. So with your permission I want to leave Kanchipuram and go to Tirupati to worship your form of Balaji."

Varadaraj murti said, "Yes, you go and worship Me in Tirupati." So he just left. After 6 months the summer came and Balaji spoke to Kancipurna and said that, "*I am very hot and no one refreshes Me with such loving service as you, so you must return to Kanchipuram and you must serve Me in my form of Varadaraj.*" So then he returned.

Again Ramanuja asked Kancipurna for initiation and he told him, "I cannot do this." Ramanuja started to think, 'that the reason why he is refusing to accept me as a disciple is because I have such a sinful heart and I have no devotional sentiments therefore he does not want such a useless disciple as me.'

### ***Kancipurna is invited to the home of Ramanuja for prasad:***

So he was thinking if somehow or other I get the remnants of this great devotees food, this *maha, maha prasad* then perhaps I will become purified and be worthy to be his disciple. With this plan in mind he invited Kancipurna to his house for prasad. He told his wife, her name was Rakshakambala, that, "You must make the best possible prasad for this great *Vaishnava* devotee. She worked very hard on his order and cooked so many beautiful preparations and Ramanuja just about noon time he went to the home of Kancipurna to personally escort him to his house for prasad. So after he left Kancipurna knew Ramanuja's plan, so he came to the house from another way. He told Rakshakambala that, "I am in a great hurry, Varadaraj is calling me, and I must do *seva* for him. You must give me prasad immediately."

She said, "But Ramanuja has already gone to your place, you must have come another way. He will be here only in a few minutes." Kancipurna said, "I cannot wait, I cannot keep the Lord waiting for my service just to feed my belly so serve me just now."

So very carefully with great attention she served him all the different preparation and he ate them all and then got up. He was so humble he washed his place with cow dung and water mixture and then he threw his leaf plate. What she did is she just cleaned up everything and Kancipurna left and Ramanuja returned.

Ramanuja said, "Why are you cooking again?" She was cooking again. "Where is Kancipurna? I could not find him"

She said, "He was here, he already ate." He said, "He ate? Where are his remnants?"

She said, "Well, he is a *sudra*, how could I give you his remnants. You are a *brahmana*, we are both *Brahmans*. I have given his remnants to a *sudra* woman and now I am cooking again for you."

Ramanuja became so much upset, so much disturbed, he said, "You are a rascal woman, you are the most unfortunate. What an offense you have committed to a great soul, thinking of him to be of a certain caste. He is a greatest devotee. The goal of my life was to be fulfilled by taking his remnants and you have spoiled everything." He sat down with his head in his hands and began to cry.

***Yamunacarya leave this world after giving final instructions to his disciple:***

Ramanuja asked Kancipurna about his initiation. So Kancipurna spoke to Varadaraj the *murti* and had many, many instructions for Ramanuja's life that he gave him about the nature of the *atma* the nature of *paramatma* his duties to preach the glories of the Lord and he also explained that you should accept initiation from one of the great, great senior devotees of Yamunacarya. Actually this happened a little later. What happened first is Yamunacarya, he was very old and he became very much sick and all of his disciples gathered around him and this was in Srirangam. It appeared that he was going to leave his body any day. So Yamunacarya was remembering Ramanuja and one of his very dear-most disciple, Mahapurna, he told him that, "You must go to Kanchipuram and bring Ramanuja here before I die."

So Mahapurna went to Kanchipuram; it takes 4 to 5 days to reach there by walk. When Ramanuja heard that Yamunacarya was calling for him, he was just bringing some fruits and flowers for Varadaraj, he said, "Let me just bring this to the deity and then I will go." So he brought them to the deity, he made his offering he said, "Now let us go." This great devotee of the Lord, Mahapurna said, "What about you wife and your mother? You will not even tell them where you are going?"

Ramanuja said, "On the order of *guru* one cannot even consider one's family. He is calling for me this is my great fortune. I cannot hesitate." And they just went to Srirangam. It took several days of walking. During that trip Yamunacarya left this world after he gave his final instructions to his devotees. *Essentially his final instructions were to always offer flowers and the best of whatever you have to the deity of Sri Ranganath and always remember his lotus feet, depend always on His mercy and free yourself from false ego by always serving the Vaishnavas.* This was his final instructions and then he left.

***An Ideal disciple:***

Devotees began to make the funeral arrangements for Yamunacarya. Devotees brought him to the river Kaveri and they were about to put him in *Samadhi* and at that time Mahapurna and Ramanuja arrive and when they arrived in Srirangam, they heard that Yamunacarya had left his body. Upon hearing this Mahapurna fell unconscious, and Ramanuja was beside himself with grief. They both ran to the banks of river Kaveri where the body of Yamunacarya was kept for last darshan. When Ramanuja saw his *guru* laying there, he felt his presence so strongly. It did not appear like a dead body to him, it appeared like full of life, full of *bhakti*.

***Three fingers***



People saw how Ramanuja was looking at the beautiful form of *guru* and it was great wonder in everyone's mind and then Ramanuja noticed that three of the fingers of Yamunacarya very tightly and intensely closed.

So Ramanuja asked, "Did Yamunacarya usually keep his fingers closed like this?" Devotees replied, "No, no we have never seen him like this."

So then Ramanuja understanding the inner heart of Yamunacarya, effulgence came on his face, and he said, "I will take 3 vows on this day:

- (1) *One is I vow to spread the message of pure devotional service by my example, by my words throughout all of the land." When he said that, one of the fingers opened and became straight.*
- (2) *Then Ramanuja said, "I vow to write a Vaishnava commentary of the Vedanta Sutra of the name Sri Bhasya, which refutes Shankaracarya's arguments and establishes pure devotional service and eternal servitude to the Lord as Supreme." When he spoke that the second finger opened.*
- (3) *Ramanuja said, "Due to great gratitude and appreciation for Parasara Muni the father of Vedavyasa and the exponent of so many instructions and the glories of Narayana from the Vishnu Purana, I will name one disciple after him." At that time the third finger opened.*

When everyone saw this, they could understand that Ramanuja really was being empowered by Yamunacarya to take over his mission. Because Yamunacarya although he preached and wrote so many beautiful, beautiful prayers and writings such as *Stotra-ratna* and others, these were the three missions that were left unfulfilled in his life. The three things that Yamunacarya wanted to do, but he was not given the time to do. So Ramanuja being the very, very dear disciple understood what his *guru* wanted. So everyone was struck with wonder and everyone could see that he was truly empowered by the mercy of Sri Gurudeva Yamunacarya.

### ***Accepting Initiation:***

Then Ramanuja decided that he would go back to Kanchipuram so he returned. On his way the devotees said, "Don't you want to see Ranganath before you go?" He said, "How can I see that Lord? The real Lord of my life, Yamunacarya who was my eternal guide, my eternal preceptor my shelter my refuge he has taken away before I could even meet with him or speak to him." In this mood he went back to Kanchipuram. It was unbearable for him to see the *Samadhi* ceremony of his gurudev. There he was meeting with Kancipurna, this great devotee regularly. It was there then that Kancipurna told him that *"The Lord has told me that you will take initiation from a very, very great disciple of Yamunacarya. His name is Mahapurna."*

One year went by and the devotees at Srirangam, they celebrated the first anniversary of the disappearance of Yamunacarya and they began to think, since he has left there are so many great devotees but nobody could speak and inspire people the way Yamunacarya did. Therefore, there is becoming much complacency and stagnancy in our mission in our *sampradaya*. The devotees felt so lost without the physical presence of Yamunacarya. He was nourishing them like a father. They were fully surrendered to whatever he said. They decided that Ramanuja is obviously and naturally his successor and he must be brought back to Srirangam. They appealed to Mahapurna to bring him and initiate him. So Mahapurna along with his wife started for Kanchipuram. They were also from a lower caste *sudra caste* by birth.

Meanwhile Lord Varadraj revealed to Kanchipurna that Ramanuja should get initiated from Mahapurna. When Ramanuja came to know this, he started walking towards Srirangam and he met Mahapurna. Ramanuja said please initiate me immediately. We don't know how long we will live. To dedicate my life to the service of guru is my life and soul. So they performed the initiation ceremony under the tree. Ramanuja then returned to Kanchipuram along with Mahapurna. Ramanuja was so happy that he divided his house in half and gave half to Mahapurna. He also ordered his wife to accept initiation. He was so happy for many months to serving his *guru*. Although, he accepted Yamunacarya as *guru* because he never accepted initiation from him, he accepted from one of his disciples, and therefore, he was the disciple in one sense in the *siksha* level of his own god brother. His *siksha guru* was Yamunacarya but his *diksha guru* was his god brother.

### ***Quarrelsome wife:***

One day when Ramanuja was out, his wife was drawing water from a well and Mahapurna's wife was also there and accidentally a few drops from Mahapurna's wife's bucket entered into Rakshakambala's bucket. She became very angry and furious, she said, "You have spoiled all this water. You think I can use this water after it has touched the water from a bucket of a *sudra*? Just because your husband has initiated us that my husband is so crazy we lost all our distinctions of caste." And she began to chastise her severely.

She said, "Now all this water has to be thrown away. It is all a waste because of your carelessness." Mahapurna's wife was very humble and very shy so she didn't say anything. She just sat down and started to cry. So when her husband came back, Mahapurna asked, "What happened?" His wife told him. He said, "It is the arrangement of Lord Narayana that we return to Srirangam. This is his indication that we should not stay here any longer." So they immediately left.

When Ramanuja returned home, he said, "Where is my *guru* gone?" He was looking all over and his wife explained that "I just gently chastised her for doing like this." "What? You crazy woman, you have insulted the wife of my *guru*. You have insulted my *guru* himself, by considering him to be a *sudra*." He said, "You are such a sinful creature. It is a sin to even see your face." And he walked out. He was very upset by all this. *Although, she was a very obedient wife and always ready to help her husband in every way and she was so beautiful, she was beautiful like an apsara and she performed*



*all rituals, she believed in Lord Narayana but she did not have that spirit of devotion that her husband had the inner feelings of the essence of real devotion. Thus she was becoming a great impediment but she was very much upset by her husband's words.*

### ***Ramanuja tricks his wife:***

Shortly after this one *brahmana* was begging alms came to the house. Rakshakambala was there, Ramanuja was out and when he saw this *brahmana* he said, "*Brahmana*, why are you looking so dejected? You look very hungry. Did you not get nice food?" He said, "I went to your house, but your wife she was very angry and she kicked me away and called me a beggar."

Ramanuja began to think very deeply for a few moments, he said, "I have a plan by which my wife will feed you very nicely." He wrote a letter, he said, "You bring this letter to my wife, tell her that this letter is from her father in her native place." So he brought the letter and when she heard that this man was a messenger of her father, she became very happy. "Oh! You are a messenger of my father!" She read the letter and she was very happy and served him all nice wonderful prasada and then sent him on his way.

Then Ramanuja came, she said, "I have received a letter from my father" and he read. It was a letter to Ramanuja saying, "My dear son, your wife's sister is about to be married and there is so much work to be done and your mother-in-law cannot do it herself. Please, it is urgent and you must send Rakshakambala right away and if you can come that is very good but if you have some urgent business at least send your wife immediately."

So Ramanuja said to his wife, "I have urgent business, I cannot go now but you should go immediately and when you go offer all my respects and love to your parents and to everyone and tell them if I can take care of my business I will come as soon as possible." She was very happy, she packed her things and she left and just after she left he went to the temple of Varadraj and said that, "*Today, I want to surrender everything to You. Today I want to completely take shelter of Your lotus feet. I do not want any distraction from my service to You and from preaching Your glories.*"

### ***Accepting sannyasa:***

Ramanuja, he brought saffron cloth and he made a *tridanda* and he went to the banks of river and there he started a fire to perform a fire sacrifice and just at that time Kancipurna came and Kancipurna he gave him *sannyasa* and he gave *sannyasa* name Yatiraj. Ramanuja went back into the town of Kanchipuram and when everyone saw that he had become a *sanyasi* he was such a young man and his wife was so beautiful and she didn't even know what was happening. Some people condemned him, they thought he had gone mad, they thought he was crazy but others who were more sincere understood that he is the most compassionate, most benevolent. He had given up such pleasures of such a beautiful wife, his mother had already died some time before and people one by one started coming to seek shelter of his lotus feet and he began preaching with such force and such devotion that gradually so many people were coming and coming. Ultimately the devotees in Srirangam, they requested him to come to Srirangam to make his base there

because that's where his *gurudeva* was residing. He went to Srirangam and made his base and in this way he preached the great philosophy of *Vishishtadvaita* and of course, we can speak for many hours about the life of Ramanujacarya, so many wonderful incidents. Such a pure and great philosophy, he was really the first *acarya* to combat against the monistic views of Shankaracarya. In fact he became so popular amongst the devotees that throughout the land people were falling at his lotus feet but amongst the *mayavadis* they either had to surrender to him or they had to hate him and there were even plots to kill him.

### ***Transcendental competition:***

Not long after he accepted *sannyasa*, one day his gurudev, Mahapurna, told him, "I want you to hear a *mantra* and the depth of explanation of this *mantra*. And there is no one more qualified than Gosthipurna to reveal you this *mantra*. Go there, serve him and hear the *mantra* from him."

*This is something very beautiful. Compassion is not a materialistic competitive idea. Everyone was working together for the greatest thing for guru and greatest thing for each devotee and ultimately for service of Lord Krishna. Transcendental competition is when there is no envy, there is no arrogance, because there is nothing transcendental about arrogance and envy. Transcendental competition is when I am trying to do the most I could do, even trying to do more than you with the hope that it will encourage you to do more and that will encourage all of us to do more. And the more we all do together, the more people in the world are touched by the mercy of Krishna and greater pleasure Krishna receives.*

*Our success is not winning. Our success is pleasing Lord Krishna. Krishna is not pleased by who is best, because spiritually we are all part and parcel of Krishna, and in His eyes we all are essentially the best; He wants to see that best come out of all of us. He comes to this world to deliver fallen souls. However many more fallen souls are being uplifted by His mercy, by our unified efforts, Krishna is pleased. Do your part the best we can and inspire each other to do better and better.*

So Mahapurna is not saying, "this is my disciple." Everything belongs to my gurudev and here is the man who can give you the *mantra* and is more qualified than me, so go to him.

### ***Ramanujacarya receives the mantra:***

So Sripad Ramanujacarya walked to the village of Thirukostiyur (74 km from Madurai), where Gosthipurna resided. He saw the house of Gosthipurna and offered his obeisances again and again. At that time Gosthipurna was giving a talk and he completely ignored Ramanujacarya. Ramanujacarya was not offended. He was humble.

*Humble people don't get offended so much. Everything is positive when we have humility. There can be no peace when a person is proud. Whatever happens, I deserve worst. What a happy state to be in. Whatever good happens, we are*

*grateful. Whatever difficulties come upon us, we feel 'I deserve worst, I got only this much and it is meant for my purification.' Everything is positive when we have humility. But when we are arrogant, whatever we get is not enough; we think we deserve more good things. When the test and trials come, we think, 'how is this possible, why? Somebody else fault it is not my fault.' There can be no peace when a person is proud.*

Ramanujacarya stood patiently before his gurudev and one day Gosthipurna asked him why he has come. Ramanujacarya explained that his guru Mahapurna had sent him to for receiving the eight syllable *mantra*. Gosthipurna said that this is not an ordinary *mantra* and cannot be given to anyone unless one is qualified. Gosthipurna asked him to go back and come back some other time. Ramanujacarya walked 100 miles and later on came again. On this occasion Gosthipurna told him to beg alms and do menial service. So Ramanujacarya was begging door to door while singing the songs of Andal in the mood of the *gopis* searching for Lord Krishna. While begging he came to the door of Gosthipurna and his daughter, Devaki, opened the door. Upon seeing her Ramanujacarya went into the mood of a gopi searching for Krishna and fell unconscious. Devaki informed her father and Gosthiurna asked her what he was singing and Devaki told him what she had heard.

Another time Ramanujacarya came and asked Devaki, what was her father doing. She said that he was meditating and Ramanujacarya asked permission to meet him. He asked Gosthipurna what he was meditating upon and he replied that he was meditating upon his guru Yamunacarya. In his mediation he saw his guru taking bath in Kaveri, with his head inside the water and only his back was visible. This reminded Gosthipurna about Kurma *avatar* - how guru gives foundation and sustenance to one's spiritual life.

Ramanujacarya understood that because I do not have sufficient faith and devotion towards my guru, he is not giving me that *mantra*. He stayed there for some days. Gosthipurna said, "I have not decided whether to give the mantra or not." Then Ramanujacarya went back to Srirangam. At that time Gosthipurna came to attend one festival. The priest had received a message from the deity that Gosthipurna should initiate Ramanujacarya. Gosthipurna replied that only the person who has done severe austerities can possibly receive this mantra. The deity told the priest that Ramanuja is perfectly qualified.

Gosthipurna walked back to his village and Ramanujacarya walked another 100 miles. *He walked back and forth 17 times and never got the mantra*. One time a devotee from Thirukostiyur came to Srirangam to meet Ramanujacarya. Upon meeting him, Ramanujacarya began to cry like a child, "I am not fit to receive the *mantra* from him." This person went back and told Gosthipurna, "This man is a perfect learned man and he is crying like a baby from separation of this mantra. Why don't you give him the mantra?"

The next time when Ramanujacarya arrived, Gosthipurna said, "you have to fast for one month, no water, and do menial service." About 16 days passed with no food and water.



His physical body was on the verge of death. Kuresa and Dasarathi went to Gosthipurna and requested but he said, "No this is required to purify him. This is not a cheap thing. If he lives I will give him the mantra and if he dies, longing for the mantra, he will go to my gurudev and he will give him the mantra."

Finally Gosthipurna permitted Ramanujacarya to take some *charnamrita*. This way he sustained for 30 days. At the end of the month Gosthipurna agreed to give him the mantra. He said, "Unless the person is completely pure with no ego, he cannot achieve this mantra. Anyone who hears or chants this mantra will receive the supreme mercy of Lord Narayana." You must promise me you will never tell anyone unless they are tested like I tested you and they are completely free from any material desire. Ramanujacarya promised and he whispered the mantra in his ears and explained the significance to him. His body lit up and was thrilled with ecstatic love.

He felt compassionate about the common people and he called thousands of people. He walked up the stairs to the temple and cried out the eight-syllable *mantra* that he had received.

***"Om namo Narayanaya!  
Om namo Narayanaya!  
Om namo Narayanaya!"***

People had never experienced anything like this. Some of them were crying, even enemies, competitors were looking at each other as spirit souls. They were already in Vaikuntha. Srila Prabhupada explains that Vaikuntha is a place in the *brahmajyoti* where Lord's eternal pastimes are taking place. *But the spirit and the consciousness can be experienced in this world, when we are thinking everyone else is loved by Krishna, everyone else is better than me so let me serve everyone.* That is the Vaikuntha consciousness and until we develop this Vaikuntha consciousness we cannot be elevated to live there.

When Gosthipurna heard this loud chanting he was very upset. Meanwhile Ramanujacarya came to Gosthipurna's house to offer his obeisances, but Gosthipurna was very angry at Ramanujacarya. He said, "You promised to not tell the mantra to anyone and you told it to everyone. For this offence you will certainly suffer in hell." Ramanujacarya with deep humility stood with folded palms, "My dear master, I know. I knew that before I revealed this mantra. But you told me that anyone who chants this mantra will go to Vaikuntha. If they all go back to godhead, it is not significant if one person like me goes to hell perpetually."

When Gosthipurna heard these words of compassion he cried, he said *"Such compassion, such kindness I have never seen in anyone. You are my guru and I am your disciple. You are a great soul. You are ready to go to hell for the deliverance of other living beings. I am just an ordinary being, please shower your mercy on me. I had read in the scriptures that someone like you is going to come in our sampradaya and our great sampradaya will be*

*known as Ramanuja Sampradaya.*" Ramanujacarya caught the lotus feet of his guru and gave all credit to his guru.

Lord Caitanya took this *maha-mantra* and distributed it freely to anyone and everyone irrespective of their qualifications or disqualifications. Simply we must give up material pursuits and chant this mantra offenselessly. We must cultivate the quality of being humbler than a blade of grass, to be more tolerant than a tree, ready to give all respects to others and expect none in return.

*If we are simply sincere, Krishna will empower us to have these qualities, but we have to try as our highest aspiration and then through this chanting of the maha mantra we can attain perfection. In Kaliyuga people are simply not qualified. When we asked Srila Prabhupada, what was our qualification to achieve this knowledge, he said "you had no qualification, I made your qualification."*

Yamunacarya said, all problems can be overcome if we simply follow one principle in our life - to *follow in the footsteps of the great souls*. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said that even by perfectly studying *sastras*, performing thousands of *yajnas*, enduring severe *tapasya*, excellently offering elaborate puja, one will not understand the goal of life. The only way to realize the goal of life is by following in the footsteps of the great soul.

*We cannot imitate these great souls like Prahlada. But we can understand what they represent - see their humility, see their compassion, see their steadfast determination and we could hear their prayers. And to follow in their footsteps, Krishna is pleased and by His grace and by the mercy coming through the holy names and the Vaishnavas all perfection is possible to anyone, everyone, whoever one may be.*

This is what Srila Prabhupada emphasized. Just take this Krishna Consciousness sincerely. *This is what it means to be sincere, to be honest, earnest and humble and with great determination follow in the footsteps of the great souls.*

### ***Kolatunga's atrocities and Kuresa defeats the king's ministers:***

There was a king of the Chola dynasty name Kolatunga who was a fanatic. We find throughout religious history this type of fanaticism blemishes the good name of God consciousness.

*Spirituality is to make us humble, forgiving and at the same time very strict and very serious about practicing our own faith and feeling compassion for all living beings. There cannot be hate in the heart of one who loves God. Basically religious fanaticism is not about God or religion, it's about the false ego or the ahankar. Ahankar has a very powerful tool to fulfill itself in the form of so called religion. Because then we can bring it to absolute dimensions that justifies in doing anything to anyone, anywhere at anytime. It is the feast for the ego.*

Kolatunga was a Saivaite and he wanted to convert everyone. He had a minister called Chaturgrama. He was a disciple of Kuresa and an associate of Ramanuja. But somehow because of too much false ego he became bitter, antagonistic. Chaturgrama suggested Kolatunga that if he wanted the kingdom to convert to his religion, then, either he will have to convert Ramanujacarya or kill him.

So the king sent military to Srirangam to invite Ramanujacarya to come to Kanchipuram for a debate. When the soldiers came Ramanujacarya was bathing in the river. He was collecting everything and was ready to go. There was a disciple of Ramanuja, his name was Kuresa (also known as Koorathazhwan and Kuresan). He was a very, very devoted disciple, he was so pure and so simple and so humble but yet so learned in his philosophy. He told Ramanuja his *gurudeva*, "Please I beg you, you are so important to this world but I am insignificant. If this world loses your association then it has lost everything, there is no hope. But I am insignificant, so please let me go and accept this debate and you hide, otherwise they will kill you."

So Ramanujacarya, seeing the great desire of his devotee, he put on the white cloth and left Srirangam in the guise of a *grihasta* and nobody knew where he was leaving and Kuresa put on his *guru's sannyasa's* robes. Mahapurna said, "I will go with you and defend the truth." So they left with the soldiers, and meanwhile Ramanujacarya and his disciples went into exile.

So Mahapurna and Kuresa came to the court of Kolatunga. Kolatunga asked them 'what is the goal and purpose of life.' *Kuresa replied that goal of life is to surrender to Lord Vishnu.* Hearing this Kolatunga became very angry. He brought the best pundits in the kingdom but Mahapurna and Kuresa defeated each one of them.

The king said, sign this statement or you will be tortured and killed. There was a paper which read, "Siva is supreme." Mahapurna and Kuresa signed the paper. Kolatunga was very happy until he read what was written. They had written that, "Even *dron* is greater than Siva." (*dron* and *siva* are measuring weights). The king was outraged and he ordered the soldiers to take them to the forest. He said that because in childhood days "Ramanujacarya saved the life of my daughter, I'll not kill him but remove his eyes." So he told his soldiers to pluck out their eyes. The soldiers had red hot iron rods and they blinded them. Kuresa folded his arms and prayed for the guards. Even guards hearts melted.

### ***The Haunted Princess:***

There was an incident that took place sometime before. When Ramanujacarya was still a student at the *ashram* of Yadavaprakash, Yadavaprakash was not only a great *mayavadi* but he was also a mystic yogi and a magician. He was very famous for exorcising ghost, remove them from haunted people. So the king's daughter princess, she was being haunted by a ghost. She was just totally mad and crazy all blasphemous were



coming from her mouth, although she was a very quiet shy girl. So they called for Yadavaprakash and he was doing all of his rituals to exorcise the ghost and the ghost with a high shrills spoke through the mouth of this girl the princess. She said, "Yadavaprakash, you have no power to get rid to me, you might as well give up all your futile attempts. I am so much more powerful than you." And Yadavaprakash, his whole image and his reputation was on the line, so he was trying again and again with no avail. But finally the ghost again spoke in a terrible shrilling voice through the mouth of this young princess that, "There is no hope, the only possibility is if your disciple, your youngest disciple Ramanuja comes, because of his purity of heart I will be forced to leave."

So others heard this, so Yadavaprakash was forced to call his disciple Ramanuja and Ramanuja came very gentle and very humble and he began to pray to Lord Narayana, "Please, save this girl." And at that time while he was praying the ghost spoke through the mouth of the girl and said, "Ramanuja, I will only leave the body of this girl if you put your lotus feet on my head."

So then the princess who was completely being controlled by the ghost bowed down and put her head on the ground and then Ramanuja placed his feet on the princess head and then Ramanuja said to the ghost, "What will be the sign that you have actually left this girl?"

She said, "There is a banyan tree that we are sitting under and she said, the highest branch of this banyan tree will crack and fall to the ground as soon as I leave." Just within seconds the highest branch of the banyan tree cracked and fell to the ground.

### ***Kuresa an ideal disciple:***

After Kuresa defeated the ministers, they wanted to kill him but the princess appeared she said, "He saved my life, how can you kill him? He saved me from that ghost, you cannot kill him." So instead of killing they burned his eyes out.

*Just see the great dedication of a disciple for his spiritual master. Then they took Kuresa and they just threw him in a jungle area where he was completely lost and they left him there. So Kuresa was feeling very grateful to Lord Narayana that he was allowed to do such a wonderful service for his spiritual master. He was not thinking, oh! I have surrendered I have done all this for my guru and look what is happening. I am blind and lost and probably starved to death. He was very grateful. He was very happy that "By your mercy my Lord, you are so kind you have allowed me to do such a wonderful seva for my gurudeva."*

*This is the quality of a real disciple. He is willing to give his life for his guru. He is willing to accept any inconvenience gladly with a grateful, happy and joyful heart.*

Mahapurna said, "I cannot continue. It is time for me to pass on. In this state I have no power to walk on. I want to show the world that you don't have to go to holy place to die

to achieve perfection. The holy place is in our heart If our heart is filled with love and devotion for guru, Krishna and the Vaishnavas - that is Vaikuntha, the spiritual world. Let me leave this example behind." He laid his head on the lap of Kuresa and said, "All holy places are in the heart of a Vaishnava. By laying my head in your lap, and giving up my body, I am in Vaikuntha." While chanting the holy names he passed from this world.

Sripad Ramanujacarya was in Melakote, where he was given shelter by a king whom he had just transformed into a great saint. In Melakote there is a big beautiful lake, there is yoga Narsimha on top of the mountain. Prahiada was in this lake and he was praying to Lord Nrsimhadeva that 'my father had to die just because of me' and he was feeling bad about that. Prahiad was called upon this hill where Lord Nrsimhadeva appeared in this form and told that his father had already been liberated. So Prahiada was very happy.

*Krishna is dayanidhi, He derives great satisfaction in delivering the poor conditioned souls. And takes even greater satisfaction, when He sees His devotees taking this mission to their heart.*

### **Glorious Kuresa:**

Kuresa came to Srirangam but when he heard that Sripad Ramanujacarya was not allowed in the temple, so Kuresa also didn't enter the temple. Ramanujacarya sent a message to Kuresa to go to Kanchipuram. He told him to please Lord Varadaraj by singing songs and prayers and then ask Him for his eyes. Kuresa did that and when Varadaraj asked him what does he want. Kuresa said, "This disciple, who is the cause of the death of my mahaguru, what hellish sufferings he is going to suffer. Please elevate him to the highest planet." News camp to Ramanujacarya and he asked Kuresa to sing prayers again. This time Kuresa asked the Lord to deliver Kolatunga. Ramanujacarya came back to see Kuresa and said, "please ask for your vision to be restored."

So he sang prayers and Lord offered him any benediction. The Lord said, "Your guru maharaj wants you to see, you have already liberated your enemies. Let Me give you your eyes." Kuresa said, "I have no desire to see the material world. My only desire is to see my beloved gurudev Ramanujacarya."

Ramanujacarya came back, saw his eyes were still burnt but Lord revealed that he was given divine vision. Kuresa could explain the flowers on the Lord's body, His lovely beautiful eyes and give vivid description of the Lord's form. Ramanujacarya understood that he was given the supreme vision. He was given the eyes of divine love where you could see God everywhere. That divine vision is the vision of the *atma* (soul) and that vision is eternal.

### **Ranganath's sons:**

One day Kuresa was very hungry. Andal could, not see him in that starving situation. She prayed to Ranganath. At that time offering was going on in the temple and the Lord told

the priest, "you keep all the Prasad in a palanquin and bring it to the house of Kuresa." When Kuresa saw that mahaprasad, he asked his wife if she had prayed to Lord Ranagnath. He said, "We should never ask the Lord to serve us. We should always serve the Lord." Kuresa took a little bit and gave rest to Andal. Andal took some and gave the rest to the general public.

From that mahaprasad that was sent by Ranganath, Andal conceived twins. When the children were born Ramanujacarya was very pleased and he named the children as Vyasa and Parashar. He regularly proclaimed that these are directly Ranganatha and Laxmi's children. Just near the feet of Ranganath there was a little swing with the little babies swinging near the altar as the personal children of the Lord. They grew up and Parashar Bhatt was made the next, *acarya* by Ramanuja.

### ***Kuresa's last wish:***

One day Kuresa was singing beautiful prayers before Ranganath and Ranganath said, "I wish to fulfil all your desires." Kuresa said please release me from this material world and take me to Your eternal abode. And one more thing whosoever is close to me let them also enter Vaikuntha. Upon hearing this Ramanujacarya became ecstatic and started dancing and chanting the holy names of the Lord. Other disciples were bewildered and they asked why he was dancing when his disciple was about to die. Ramanujacarya replied, "He said, anyone who is close to him gets to go to Vaikuntha and I am his guru, so I am close to him and because of him I get to go to Vaikuntha."

Then he became grave and asked why do you wish to die. Kuresa replied, "I know you and all the god brothers are going to come back to Vaikuntha. I wish to go ahead and keep everything ready for your arrival."

We all know how powerful lust, anger, envy, greed, egoism, illusion are. They are insurmountable, but if we just learn to pray like the great souls have taught us and make this our ultimate aspiration to be the dust of the feet of Rupa and Raghunath then by the Lord's mercy He can carry us to that cherished destination.

And it is available and accessible with special concession to everyone in this age of kali. In earlier ages you had to be specially qualified. But in kaliyuga no one is qualified. So whatever be your background, whosoever you are just give up your attachments, just try to serve and by the grace of the Lord, who has descended in his names, every one of us can achieve perfection. With this hope and prayer we chant the holy names.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare |

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare ||

### ***Vishishtadvaita Philosophy:***

Ramanujacarya was both loved and hated like all *acaryas*. Those who were representatives of darkness hated him, they were threatened by him but those who were innocent, who were receptive to the truth, their hearts were utterly surrendered with love at his lotus



feet. He preached very far and wide the teachings of *Vishishtadvaita Philosophy*. *Vishishtadvaita philosophy* essentially explains that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Narayana has an eternal form, has an eternal abode and is ever emerged in loving pastimes with his devotees and he explains that there are three most important principles:

- *There is cit- which is the spirit soul the individual jivatma and then,*
- *There is sat- which is the material existence explains that there is individual jivatma there is the material existence,*
- *And then there is ishwara-God or Narayana who is the source of everything.*

He refuted Shankar's explanation who said that the *jivatma* and material nature are all illusion, the only truth is *ishwara* the only truth is *Brahman*.

### ***Sri Bhasya:***

In his *Sri Bhasya*, Ramanujacarya explained (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* verse 1.1.1) *janmady asya yato* - that everybody is emanating from the absolute truth that means the *jivatmas* are emanating from the absolute truth and also material nature is emanating from the absolute truth because everything is emanating from the absolute truth so how could anything emanating from the absolute truth be an illusion. We must understand that they are the energies of the absolute truth emanating from the absolute truth. They are not illusions, and he compared that Lord Krishna is like the soul and that material energy *maya* energy the *jivatma* are like his body that all have a relationship through the soul and in this way he established the eternality of material nature and the eternality of the *jivatma* and he explained very, very deep philosophical terms the relationships between the three and established this *Vishishtadvaita* which means qualified oneness. Qualified in the sense that there is an eternal relationship between the Lord and his energies which qualifies the oneness whereas Sripad Shankaracarya he thought monism which means simply that *Brahma satyam jagan mithya*- that everything is illusion except *Brahman* except the absolute truth - unqualified oneness.

Ramanujacarya really established the philosophical principles of Vaishnavism very strongly and what he did was he took the devotional sentiments of the Alvars of Yamunacarya that they had such love and devotion to the Supreme Absolute Truth - Narayana but he put it in terms of philosophy which had not been done before in the Sri Sampradaya. He took these devotional sentiments and wrote them in terms of such a philosophy that it was irrefutable and undefeatable and especially with this philosophy he extinguished the principles of monism established by Sri Shankaracarya. Of course, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu he took from the Ramanuja Sampradaya so much of the essence of these very, very divine teachings of pure bhakti and of course, Madhavacarya, he also simply expanded on the teachings of Ramanujacarya. He no way contradicted the teachings but expanded upon the teachings with Advaita Philosophy and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu he culminated the complete comprehension of the absolute Truth through his philosophy of *acintya-bhedabheda-tattva*.

### ***Teachings of Ramanujacarya:***

This way we can understand how the Lord through his empowered representatives has staged the scene for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance of the Yuga-Avatar. First to annihilate the misuse of the Vedas, he appeared as Buddha then after Buddha established non-violence, moral conduct, austerity, meditation pure life then the Lord was able to re-establish the Vedas but in order to do so he had to keep the same conclusion as the Buddhist and in the form of Lord Siva who is an expansion of Lord Narayana himself he came and appeared in order to re-establish the conclusions of the Vedas and then he appeared in his form of Ramanujacarya said to be Laxmana incarnation, he came to establish the real essence of the Vedas which was pure devotional service. Ramanujacarya was very strict he considered the only valid evidence anywhere is in the *sastra* not from inference anywhere else, only the *sastra's* authority. In this way he was able to keep right to the *sastra* and establish Narayana as the Supreme Absolute Truth through the Upanishad's, through the Vedas through all of this. Especially he dealt with the Upanishad's and the Vedanta sutra's because he knew that was the only scriptures that the staunch mayavadis accept as the highest truth. So Ramanujacarya did not deal so much with the *Puranas*, he did not make commentaries on the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, although, he accepted it. Most of his teachings were on the basis of *Upanishad's* and the *Vedanta Sutra* because that's where he could really convince people of the truth of the Vedas and take away the illusions of Shankar's teachings. So in this way Ramanuja came to re-establish the principles of pure bhakti and then Madhvacarya came to establish the worship of Krishna and then Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to bring them all together and just the final ultimate essence of all philosophy *acintya-bhedabheda-tattva* and not only that he has given within the field of *acintya-bhedabheda-tattva* philosophy the most purest, essential highest relationships that can be developed through the five *rasas* with Lord Sri Krishna in *Goloka Vrindavana*.

So on this very holy day the appearance day of such great *acaryas* it is very auspicious to remember their lives to nourish our minds by hearing their teachings and also by praying at their lotus feet because factually these great *acaryas* are also within our line in the sense that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu who is Krishna himself he imbibed the essence of all the four great sampradayas. All the four great sampradayas in the purest, highest most essential form were all merged together in the teachings of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Although in the disciplic line we are following strictly according to the *Brahma-Sampradaya*, the *Madhava-sampradaya* but in essence Mahaprabhu who was the Lord Narayana himself, Krishna himself he has come to synthesize all the sampradayas. So by surrendering to his teachings one is actually surrendering and getting the true substance and the mercy of all the *acaryas* of all the previous sampradayas of the 4 great lines coming from the Lord. In this way Ramanujacarya certainly is one of our great *acaryas* and it is auspicious to worship guru before we worship God and Balarama is the representation of a guru and Laxmana is Balarama and so Rama Navami is coming up I am thinking it is very auspicious that today by hearing and chanting the glories of Laxmana who is the most intimate associate of Lord Rama and the representative of guru of Rama that we have begun our worship of Sri Rama Navami by falling at the lotus feet of Ramanujacarya.

### ***Disappearance of Sripad Ramanujacarya:***

One day Ramanujacarya brought the son of Kuresa, Parasara Bhattar in front of the deity of Sri Ranganatha, and prayed to Sri Ranganatha to empower him, to be the *acarya* of the *Sri Sampradaya*. At that time, one of the *pujari's* came to give garland to Ramanujacarya, but he had the *pujari* give the garland to Parasara Bhattar, and Ramanujacarya took the *prasada* of his disciple, just to establish the position of his successor. He placed Parasara on the *vyasasana*, put garland on him, and embraced him, with tears of love, and told all the devotees to accept him as his representative. Then, on the last day, of Ramanujacarya's physical life in this world, he gave wonderful instructions his devotees. Then, he fed a wonderful feast while the Vaishnavas.

With folded hands, he begged forgiveness. He begged forgiveness from the *pujaris*, because Ramanujacarya was very strict about the execution of *Pancharitika vidhi*, following the proper rules and regulations in the service of the Lord. Why? All these rules, all these regulations, all these rituals are only for one purpose: *to give pleasure to the Lord*. As long as we are on a condition state, trying to serve, we must serve following in the footsteps of great souls. So for a real devotee, when we perform these rituals, and chant these *mantras*, what are we really doing?

Unfortunately, sometimes, people consider the ritual to be a thing of itself. It is called *Smartha Brahmin*. Learn many *mantras*, many purifications, *mantra, tantra, yantra, mudra*. In this way, if you do not do that correctly, then you are useless. But in the line of Sripad Ramanujacarya, we find Kanchipurna. He did not know the rituals so well. He did not know all the *mantras* so well. He was from *sudra* birth, but he fan the Lord with such simplicity and such purity, that the Lord spoke to him. The Lord revealed the innermost feelings of his heart to Kanchipurna, whereas other *brahmanas* who were chanting *mantras* and doing all the *mudras* and *mantra, tantra, yantra* ... so many *pujas* ... Sometimes, the Lord does not only not talk to them, but the Lord does not even care to accept their offerings. *patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati* (*Bhagavad-Gita* 9.26). Lord Krishna tells in *Bhagavad-Gita*, that, "Even if you offer Me a leaf of flower, of fruit or water, if it is offered with devotion, I will accept." Krishna accepts our devotion. Srila Prabhupada, he explains that Krishna does not accept the thing you offer, Krishna accepts the purpose, the intention in which you offer it. If it is offered with love, Krishna accepts that love, and Krishna becomes indebted to the love of His devotee. So, all of these rituals of the *Pancharitika vidhi* and all of the *mantras*, we should see them this way. That by following them, we are humbling ourselves before the previous *acaryas*. This is the way they are telling us to do it. So, even if we have little realisation, it should be a feeling of humility. I cannot approach the Lord directly. I am approaching through the path of the previous *acaryas*, (*mahajano yena gatah sa panthah*), and if this is how the previous *acaryas* are telling us, the type of respect, the type of honour, the type of purity, and cleanliness, internally and externally, it is our humble offering to follow in this way, and that all of the rituals, *mantra, tantra, yantra, mudra, pudrah*, they all become glorious offerings of *bhakti*, devotion.



So, Ramanujacarya begged forgiveness of *pujaris*, that, "I have given you many rules to follow, and it may have given you some inconvenience." He begged forgiveness with folded hands, from all of his disciples, from his god brothers, with tears in his eyes, and a genuinely humble heart. He begged forgiveness from everyone, with folded palms, and his disciples, tears were bursting from their eyes; dear Gurudev, why are you begging forgiveness from us. Everything you have done is perfect, everything you have taught us, everything you have done for us, it's the unconditional mercy of the Lord. You have spread *Bhakti* throughout the world? Why are you begging forgiveness from us? But Sripad Ramanujacarya, from the core of his heart, demonstrated the natural humility of a great soul. Our *param* Guru, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, in his last evening, before he departed from this world, he also folded his hands with tears in his eyes, and begged forgiveness from everyone. And our beloved Guru Maharaj, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada also followed in the footsteps of these great souls. From his heart of hearts, with tears in his eyes, he begged forgiveness, for any offence he committed to anyone. Prabhupada said, "Sometimes I used harsh words like 'rascal,' but I did it only for the service of the Lord, but still, if I have hurt anyone's heart, I beg forgiveness."

After begging forgiveness from all the devotees, and all living entities, Ramanujacarya gave his last instruction. *All of you serve Lord Ranganatha, with sincere love and devotion, and live cooperatively with all the Vaishnavas. Let that be your happiness. Our Guru Maharaj followed in footsteps. That was also his last instruction, to worship the Lord, to chant the holy name of the Lord, and to live cooperatively with devotees. And make that our happiness. Love means our happiness is the Lord's happiness. And this is the Lord's happiness, when He sees devotees are humble, and cooperative with one another in a mood of service. trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih*, to be humble like a blade of grass, tolerant like tree, eager to offer all respect to all others, and expect no respect for oneself. In this way, Lord Krishna will be pleased, and empower us to constantly chant his holy name.

*After speaking these words, Sripad Ramanujacarya laid his head in the lap of his beloved cousin brother, Govinda, who was initiated as sannyasi by him. With his head in the lap of Govinda, and his feet on the lap of his loyal, faithful servant, Andrapurna, he called for the devotees. All the devotees loudly chanted, they did mantras, his favourite passages of the scriptures, and many chanted around him, the holy names of the Lord. The tumultuous sound of the holy names surrounded Sripad Ramanujacarya, and then, he asked the devotees to bring the sandals of his Guru Mahapurna, and he set the sandals before him, and he gazed on the feet of his Guru Macharajanis with his eyes, and in his heart of heart, he meditated on the lotus feet of his most beloved spiritual master, Sri Yamunacarya, and in that most auspicious setting, surrounded by the glorification of the holy name, Sripad Ramanujacarya gave up his life.*

The devotees were weeping and crying. Some were even considering suicide, but Ramanujacarya previously forbid them to do so. When we were at Ramanujacarya's birthplace, we told the story, how some of the devotees, they were so attached to him, they lived in his association for so long. *"How will we survive when you leave this world."* Sripad Ramanujacarya said, *"I am living through my instruction, and those who follow my instructions are living with me always,"* but for those of you who are very deeply attached to my physical form, I will be here with you. And here at Srirangam, he calls some sculptures to make a deity, which was a replica of Ramanujacarya. Sripad Ramanujacarya embraced that deity, and breathed upon that deity, and giving his own life into that deity, the *Archa Vighraha*. And he sent that deity to his birthplace, Sriperumbudur. On the day it was installed, Ramanujacarya began to cry blood from his eyes, just to emphasise that he is ever living in that deity. It was at noon, on the 10th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Magh, when Sripad Ramanujacarya, in the most exemplary way, gave up his life here in Srirangam. His intimate disciples, Dasarati, and others, they performed the ceremony of the *Samadhi*.

*[reference: His Holiness Radhanath Swami Maharaj's lecture on the Life and Teachings of Sripad Ramanujacarya]*

### **Directions to Srirangam:**

Srirangam is 10 km from Tiruchirappalli (also called Trichy), a prominent city in Tamil Nadu one can reach by air, rail or road. One can take a taxi or a city bus from Trichy to Srirangam.



### **Srirangam Yatra lectures:**

- Srirangam Yatra 2005 - lecture 1: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQhVgiopG4E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQhVgiopG4E)  
Srirangam Yatra 2005 - lecture 2: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gd4woOnmqyo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gd4woOnmqyo)  
Srirangam Yatra 2005 - lecture 3: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=myri8MYIm3c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myri8MYIm3c)  
Srirangam Yatra 2005 - lecture 4: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qzAP9P5peg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qzAP9P5peg)  
Srirangam Yatra 2010 - welcoming: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N\\_3MbjvTUY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N_3MbjvTUY)

### **Audio lectures:**

- (1) <http://audio.iskcondesiretree.com/index.php?q=f&f=%2F02 - ISKCON Swamis%2FISKCON Swamis - R to Y%2FHis Holiness Radhanath Swami%2FLectures%2F02 - Yatra%2F2005-2006 South India yatra%2F02 Kamchipuram>
- (2) <http://audio.iskcondesiretree.com/index.php?q=f&f=%2F02 - ISKCON Swamis%2FISKCON Swamis - R to Y%2FHis Holiness Radhanath Swami%2FLectures%2F02 - Yatra%2F2005-2006 South India yatra%2F03 Sri+Rangam>

**Srirangam Ranganatha Swamy Temple Kumbabishekam 2015:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGdQ4uW3Qns>

**Kanchipuram Yatra:** [www.dandavats.com/?p=33599](http://www.dandavats.com/?p=33599)

**Mayapur TV:** <http://Mayapur.tv> / **Vrindavana TV:** <http://Vrindavana.tv>

**Holy Pilgrimages:** [www.Holy-Pilgrimages.com](http://www.Holy-Pilgrimages.com)

**Holy Dham:** [www.HolyDham.com](http://www.HolyDham.com)

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**HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE ||**